



Physical Activity Backgrounder for Decision-Makers

“Physical inactivity is estimated to cause annually 2 million deaths worldwide.”

WHO
(World Health Organization),
2007, *Why Move for Health*



Increasing Physical Activity: What Can You Do?

Statistics Canada reports that 50.5% of adult Albertans are overweight or obese, making them at risk for serious health problems (Statistics Canada, 2005, *Canadian Community Health Survey*). Similarly, many of our children are inactive and overweight, and their health is also at risk.

If you're a decision-maker, you can play a key role in increasing physical activity. You help to create the government and organizational policy and strategies that affect the environments where Albertans live, learn, work, and play. With your help, we will see positive results such as:

- reduced public health care costs
- less employee absenteeism and lower health insurance costs
- communities that are designed to be walkable
- improved school learning environments
- fewer falls and increased independent living by seniors

Why supportive environments are important

Those who may have difficulty being physically active include people who:

- have low family incomes
- live in remote areas with few facilities and programs
- have physical disabilities and are limited by accessibility issues
- are elderly and who have health and mobility challenges
- have mental health issues such as depression or anxiety

Inactive people are more likely to become active if they are in environments that support physical activity. While people need to decide to be physically active, they also need opportunities to be physically active. These opportunities should be found in the environments where they live, learn, work, and play.

Join us in creating a more active Alberta

The Alberta Centre for Active Living and its partner active living agencies support you in increasing physical activity. We can provide you with evidence to support your physical activity initiatives, and we can connect you with physical activity professionals to ensure you get the best results.



The Costs of Physical Inactivity

“Physical activity has economic benefits, especially in terms of reduced health-care costs, increased productivity and healthier physical and social environments.”

WHO (World Health Organization), 2007, *Benefits of Physical Activity*

Government of Alberta ■

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Physical inactivity and chronic diseases

Seven chronic diseases are associated with physical inactivity: coronary artery disease, stroke, hypertension, colon cancer, breast cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and osteoporosis (Katzmarzyk & Janssen, 2004, *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*).

The three most expensive diseases associated with physical inactivity are:

- coronary artery disease (CDN\$1.7 billion)
- osteoporosis (CDN\$1.5 billion)
- stroke (CDN\$765 million)

(Katzmarzyk & Janssen, 2004, *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*)

If Canadians were to become more active, there would be:

- 26% fewer deaths from Type 2 diabetes
- 20% fewer deaths from colon cancer
- 22% fewer deaths from cardiovascular disease

(Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2005, *Cost of Physical Inactivity*)

Alberta rates of physical inactivity

According to the 2009 *Alberta Survey on Physical Activity* (Alberta Centre for Active Living, 2009):

- 41.5% of Albertans are physically inactive.
- 44.6% of Edmontonians are physically inactive.

- 36% of Calgarians are physically inactive.

Physical activity:

- decreases with age
- is higher among people with more education
- is higher among employed people
- is higher among people with a higher income

(Alberta Centre for Active Living, 2009 *Alberta Survey on Physical Activity*)

Canadian rates of physical inactivity

Adults

- 46.7% of Canadians 12 years and older are physically inactive (44.1% of males and 49.3% of females).
- 53.3% of Canadians over the age of 65 are physically inactive (45.8% of males and 59.3% of females).

(Statistics Canada, 2005, *Canadian Community Health Survey*)

Children

87% of children and youth (5-19 years old) are not active enough to meet Health Canada's physical activity guidelines (Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 2008, *Physical Activity Levels Among Youth [CANPLAY] Survey*).

