

Pfizer Australia

HEALTH REPORT

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HEALTHY SPORT AND EXERCISE

This edition of the Pfizer Australia Health Report looks at healthy sport and exercise.

Sport and exercise are major factors in maintaining good health and can help prevent diseases associated with obesity.

However, this report reveals that more people than ever are doing so little exercise, their health may suffer.

This latest Pfizer Australia Health Report, produced in partnership with Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), highlights the importance of sport and exercise for the whole family.

Its research shows that more Australians than previously thought – up to 60 percent – are not doing enough activity for optimal health (thirty minutes of moderate intensity activity on at least five days per week).

Almost one-in-three of those surveyed said they were sitting most of the time at work, indicating little opportunity for physical activity during working hours.

While many adult Australians are aware that sport and exercise are good for them, few were aware that it does not have to be intensive. A brisk walk can suffice.

Our report's findings are based on responses from 1,405 Australians aged 18 years and over. The research was conducted in April 2006 by independent consultants Stollznow Research in consultation with Sports Medicine Australia.

The Pfizer Australia Health Report is produced monthly, in collaboration with health consumer organisations and medical experts, and provides information and news to help you and your family live a healthier, happier lifestyle.

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WHY EXERCISE?



Our bodies were built for activity.

Unfortunately, changes in the way we live our lives have meant that we are much less active – and for many this has resulted in poorer health. Obesity is one consequence of less activity and exercise.

But there is an upside.

Increasing physical activity and exercise can help improve your health – and in more ways than one.

Just half an hour of moderate intensity activity (like brisk walking) on most days of the week will help improve your health, according to Sports Medicine Australia. This is one of the Australian Government Physical Activity Guidelines.

Most health problems can actually be helped by physical activity.

These include heart problems, diabetes, cancer, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, lung problems (including asthma), mobility problems and even mental health. Check with your doctor or health professional about the amount of activity that is right for you.

To lose weight, a higher level of activity is needed. A modified diet is also important for losing weight.

For older people, exercise programs can also help prevent falls. Strength and balance are important factors in fall prevention. And these strength exercises only need to be done two or three times a week.

The most important thing to remember about physical activity is that you don't need to strain, hurt or over-exert yourself to get benefit. This is especially important if you haven't been active, exercised or played sport for some time. Remember to start slowly.

New national figures show Australians not getting more active

National research figures released with this report reveal adult Australians are not taking up the challenge to become more active.

Now more than half are insufficiently active for health benefit, despite the millions being poured into educating the public on the importance of a healthy active lifestyle.

The research was conducted by medicines company Pfizer Australia in conjunction with Sports Medicine Australia (SMA).

The research showed more Australians than previously thought – up to 60 percent – are not doing enough activity for optimal health (30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on at least five days per week).

Almost one in three of those surveyed said they were sitting most of the time at work, indicating little opportunity for physical activity during working hours.

And the picture outside working hours is not that much brighter. Only one-in-10 Australian adults say they play any organised sport and around three quarters of parents reveal that their family does not play sport or do any physical activity together.

Professor Wendy Brown from Sports Medicine Australia says these figures are very concerning.



“The growing obesity problem (around 60 per cent of Australians are now overweight or obese) is directly linked to an energy imbalance – energy intake from food is not being matched by the energy expenditure of physical activity,” Professor Brown said.

“Inactivity increases a person's susceptibility to a host of serious health problems, such as heart attack, stroke and diabetes. Increasing activity by even a small amount helps counteract such problems – even if you don't manage to lose weight.

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This Report has been produced in partnership with Sports Medicine Australia (SMA), an independent not-for-profit association of health professionals interested in the role of sport and physical activity in the health of all Australians. Sports Medicine Australia's mission is to function as the peak authority in Australia on medicine and science in physical activity and sport, the medical and health care of active persons at all levels, well-being through safe physical activity and prevention of health problems associated with inactivity. More information about SMA can be found at www.sma.org.au

KIDS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Physical activity – sport and play – is even more important for children than adults.

The way that children's bodies and minds grow and develop is strongly influenced by their physical activity, according to Professor Wendy Brown from Sports Medicine Australia.

"Too little physical activity increases the risk of obesity, poor physical skills and poor neuromuscular development," Professor Brown said.

"Most importantly, it is in childhood that most bone growth occurs.

"Physical activity, play and sport give children the opportunity to "put bone in the bank" – to lay down lots of healthy bone and reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

"This is especially important for girls."

The Australian Government has specific recommendations for physical activity for children and young people.

These Recommendations say that: *children (aged 5-18) should participate in at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day.*

"Remember – one hour is the minimum. More would be better," Professor Brown said.

"Further, the Recommendations also say that *children and young people should not spend more than 2 hours a day using electronic media for entertainment (eg computer games, Internet, TV), particularly during daylight hours.*"

It is also important to remember that too much exercise can be harmful for children. Young bodies have a higher risk of injury from overtraining.

Children are less able to adapt to heat stress than adults and they should never be forced to exercise if they are feeling stressed by the heat.

Adults and Physical Activity

It is important to maintain a reasonable level of physical activity throughout life.

Australia has a real problem in that the largest group of the adult population, those aged 45 to 65 (the “babyboomers”), are the group of the population with the lowest rates of physical activity and the highest rates of weight gain.

Unless the inactive babyboomers can be persuaded to become more active, they represent a time bomb for the nation's health system, warned Sports Medicine Australia's Professor Wendy Brown.

The Australian Government has four physical activity guidelines for adults:

- 1. Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience.** For example, be happy if you are forced to park further away from your destination. See the extra walk as an opportunity to “get your steps up”, not as a time wasting inconvenience.
- 2. Be active every day in as many ways as you can.** For example, where possible, leave the car in the garage. Rising petrol prices might be a good motivator. Try and avoid labour-saving devices. Remember – “chopped wood warms twice!”
- 3. Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days.** This does NOT have to be taken in a single dose; it can be accumulated. A useful target is 10,000 steps a day. A reliable pedometer, or step counter, can be a good motivator to accumulate steps.
- 4. If you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous activity for extra health and fitness.** This is activity that makes you “huff and puff”. If you have been inactive for a long period, it is best that you build up slowly to more



vigorous activity and if you have a health condition, you should see your doctor first.

But remember – you don't have to hurt yourself. “No pain no gain” is simply NOT true.

Older Australians and retired people have many opportunities at home for improved exercise. The SMA website (www.sma.org.au/physicalactivity) shows how you can find time for gentle exercise while waiting for the kettle to boil, talking on the telephone, or even watching television.

PREVENTING SPORTS INJURY

Our research has shown that parents are worried about their children being injured when playing sport.

And many parents have stopped their children playing certain sports because of safety concerns.

But it is important to know that although sporting injuries can occur, with adequate preparation and preventative measures, it's possible for children to play sport safely with minimal risk of injury.

Playing sport is one of the easiest, most sociable and most enjoyable ways of exercising.

Parents' roles and attitudes towards their children playing sport influence enthusiasm and participation rates in sport and physical activity.

Here are some tips for parents to help keep children active and injury free in sport and physical activity:

- Show your children that you think physical activity is important by being active yourself. It is important for parents to be positive and encouraging. You are your child's role model;
- Teach your children the skills for the sports they want to play and practise with them;
- Provide your child with the correct safety equipment. Find out from the coach the equipment your child needs for the sport, obtain professional advice before purchasing equipment;
- Teach children how to properly warm up before, and cool down after, physical activity. Include stretches that are appropriate for their age;



- Ensure children drink before, during and after physical activity. Make sure they drink from their own water bottle;
- Provide a nutritious and healthy diet;
- Ensure coaches/officials are aware of any medical conditions your child may have, for example asthma. Fill out a medical history form for your child if one is provided by the club;
- Whenever possible, stay and watch your child play for the entire game;
- Contribute positively. For example volunteer to become a Sports Trainer or take a Sports Medicine Awareness Course. (See www.sma.org.au/sportstrainers/ to find out how.) Anyone can do these courses.

Participating in sport and physical activity is a great way for children to stay fit and healthy. Staying injury free also guarantees children will keep enjoying their sport for the long term.

Prevent injury with Smartplay

Smartplay is a sport safety and injury prevention program. (www.smartplay.com.au)

Smartplay aims to reduce the incidence and severity of sport and recreation injuries and carries the slogan 'Warm Up, Drink Up, Gear Up'. This is simple yet important injury prevention practice for all sports participants, coaches and administrators. ('Warm Up' for correct warm up, cool down and stretching; 'Drink Up' for appropriate hydration; 'Gear Up' for protective equipment.)

Our poll showed 88 percent of parents agreed with the importance of using mouthguards in contact sports, yet compliance levels are far below this level.

Dental injuries are often permanent and can be painful and expensive – often for years after the incident that caused the injury. Eye injuries can be catastrophic.

Mouthguards and appropriate eye protection should be worn at all times – even during training – in any sport where there is danger to the teeth or eyes.

Sports Medicine Australia's President, Dr Bruce Mitchell said most injuries occur pre-season and in players returning from injury.

"There are many effective countermeasures available," Dr Mitchell said.

"Taping has been shown to reduce the incidence of re-injury; simple awareness of levels of fitness and appropriate training regimes early in the season are also important."

If an injury occurs, appropriate treatment can greatly shorten the recovery time. It is essential that you consult an appropriately qualified sports medicine professional. SMA members display the SMA logo on their practices.



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"Because most jobs today involve little physical activity, it is particularly important that people who sit all day make time to exercise every day. The longer you sit at work, the more you should move when you are not at work.

Despite our international reputation as a sports-loving nation, more than half the respondents to the survey said they believed that Australians were generally not very physically active, and this turns out to be true. Only 14 percent of Australians play sport for a club or team, with one-in-three Australians "not interested" and one-in-four not having "enough time".

Fear of injury is a key concern for one-in-three parents whose children play organised sport. One-in-ten has stopped a child from taking part in a particular sport at least once because of a fear of injury.

USEFUL LINKS

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

SPORTS MEDICINE AUSTRALIA: www.sma.org.au

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING:

www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/Physical+Activity-6

THE HEART FOUNDATION: www.heartfoundation.com.au

VICHEALTH: www.nof.org

INJURY PREVENTION

SPORTS MEDICINE AUSTRALIA: www.sma.org.au

SMARTPLAY: www.smartplay.com.au

NSW SPORTING INJURIES COMMITTEE: www.sportinginjuries.nsw.gov.au

INJURY UPDATE: www.injuryupdate.com.au

PARENTS PLAN TO PREVENT INJURIES

Around three-quarters of parents feel most worried about children being injured in contact sports like Rugby League, Rugby Union or Australian Rules.

Almost 90 percent of parents agree that it is important to wear a mouth guard in contact sport and 76 percent believe a soft padded helmet is also important.

In addition, 95 percent of Australians agree that it is important to warm up before exercise. Just over three-in-four agree that advice about injury prevention or treatment for sports injuries should

come from a health professional with specialised training in sports medicine.

More than half of all Australians associate being physically active with a "no pain, no gain" attitude, which, according to Sports Medicine Australia President, Dr Bruce Mitchell, could indicate a reason why people are not exercising.

"Exercise should be fun and shouldn't be viewed as a painful experience. Even just going for a brisk walk or playing ball with the kids in the park is all it takes to get active," he added.

