



NEWS RELEASE
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Report: Less than one quarter of children in the U.S. meet current physical activity guidelines; physical activity and health organizations commit to renewed efforts

Columbia, South Carolina – Three quarters of children in the United States are currently not meeting physical activity recommendations, putting them at increased risk for future obesity, diabetes and related chronic illness, according to a report issued today. The report was authored by researchers and concerned health experts from across the country, assembled by the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance.

The 2016 United States Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth shows only 21.6 percent of children ages 6-19 meet U.S. physical activity guidelines. Further, nearly 63 percent of children are exceeding sedentary behavior guidelines, which suggest no more than two hours of screen time per day. Less than 13 percent of children walk or ride their bike to school, a habit that has been associated with lower odds of obesity among children. The report does show an improvement in the number of youth who are participating on at least one sports team—half of America’s children—since the 1970s but shows a significant gender disparity with more boys participating than girls.

“We hope the information in this Report Card will be useful to health professionals, community organizations and policy makers as they strive to respond by developing and implementing strategies that improve access to physical activity opportunities for kids,” said Dr. Peter Katzmarzyk, associate executive director of population science at LSU’s Pennington Biomedical Research Center and committee chair on the report.

There is a strong consensus among health professionals that physical activity plays a major role in promoting children’s health. The World Health Organization and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend that children and youth engage in a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily, including vigorous-intensity activity at least three days per week.

“The results of this new Report Card demonstrate that we have much to do to ensure that our children become active, fit and healthy adults. The National Physical Activity Plan lays out a strategy for increasing the physical activity level of all segments of our population, children and youth included. We call on parents, school personnel and community leaders to review the Plan and make the changes that will enable many more of our young people to meet national physical activity guidelines,” said Dr. Russell Pate, chairman of the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance Board of Directors.

Pate added, “The National Physical Activity Plan Alliance and its 23 organizational partners will redouble their efforts to build on recent advances. These include Congress’ passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act which now, for the first time, includes physical education as a key component of a well-rounded education and the release of *Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities.*”

Four key messages and recommendations to increase physical activity among youth were included in the report:

- Schools should work to increase physical activity opportunities among youth and should be a key part of a national strategy to increase physical activity.
- Preschool and childcare centers should enhance physical activity.
- To advance efforts to increase physical activity among youth, key research gaps should be addressed.
- Changes involving the built environment (such as safe outdoor and indoor recreation spaces) and similar sectors are promising, but need additional work.

The Report Card assessed data from multiple nationally representative surveys to evaluate levels of physical activity and sedentary behavior in American children and youth, facilitators and barriers for physical activity and health outcomes related to physical activity, among 10 key indicators:

- Overall physical activity levels
- Sedentary behaviors
- Active transportation
- Organized sport participation
- Active play
- Health-related fitness
- Family and peers
- Schools
- Community and the built environment
- Government strategies and investments

The 2016 U.S. Report Card was released today in conjunction with 37 other countries at the 2016 International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health in Bangkok, Thailand. This is the second comprehensive assessment of physical activity in U.S. children and youth, updating the first Report Card released in 2014. The US Report Card can be downloaded from the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance website (<http://physicalactivityplan.org/projects/reportcard.html>). Further information about the international release of the Report Card can be obtained from the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance website (www.activehealthykids.org). The Report Card is produced by the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance's (NPAP) U.S. Report Card Research Advisory Committee. Find more information about the Plan at www.physicalactivityplan.org.

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About the National Physical Activity Plan Alliance: The NPAPA is a not-for-profit 501-c3 organization committed to ensuring the long-term success of the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP). A coalition of national organizations and at-large experts on physical activity and public health, they have come together to ensure that efforts to provide physical activity in the American population will be guided by a comprehensive, evidence-based strategic plan. For more information, see <http://physicalactivityplan.org>.

About the Pennington Biomedical Research Center: The Pennington Biomedical Research Center is at the forefront of medical discovery as it relates to understanding the triggers of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and dementia. It is a campus of Louisiana State University and conducts basic, clinical and population research. The research enterprise at Pennington Biomedical includes approximately 80 faculty and more than 25 post-doctoral fellows who comprise a network of 44 laboratories supported by lab technicians, nurses, dietitians, and support personnel, and 13 highly specialized core service facilities. Pennington Biomedical's more than 500 employees perform research activities in state-of-the-art facilities on the 222-acre campus located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. For more information, see <http://www.pbrc.edu>.

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