

Executive Summary

The benefits of regular physical activity occur throughout life and are essential for healthy aging. Despite this, less than 15 percent of older adults age 65 years and older meet the aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity recommendations set forth in the second edition of the *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*. Furthermore, physical activity levels often decrease as adults get older. *The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Midcourse Report: Implementation Strategies for Older Adults (Midcourse Report)* reinforces the amounts and types of physical activity Americans need, as outlined in the *Guidelines*, and highlights effective strategies for increasing physical activity. Older adults were selected for this report because they are an expanding population with low rates of physical activity and because of the physical, mental, social, and economic benefits of physical activity for older adults.

Many older adults face barriers to getting or staying physically active. These barriers often relate to older adults' capabilities, opportunities, or motivation. Understanding the different barriers older adults face is key to delivering effective and equitable interventions.

- Capability-related barriers include individual attributes such as chronic health conditions, physical or cognitive limitations, and pain.
- Opportunity-related barriers include external factors such as social isolation; inequitable access to spaces, equipment, or guidance; neighborhood environment characteristics like low-quality sidewalks or poor lighting; and environmental limitations like climate-related issues.
- Motivation-related barriers include personal attitudes and beliefs, such as the perception that it is too late to start being active; fear of falling, pain, or injury; low self-efficacy, knowledge, and awareness; or lack of enjoyment. Insufficient social support and societal biases related to age can exacerbate motivation-related barriers.

The primary audiences for the *Midcourse Report* are policymakers; exercise and health professionals; clinicians; gerontologists; built environment professionals; local, state, territorial, and Tribal leaders; and others working with older adults. The *Midcourse Report* summarizes strategies that these audiences can use in key settings to increase physical activity among older adults and to reinforce the message that people can begin or restart physical activity at any age.

Key Findings

This report highlights a variety of strategies that can be implemented wherever older adults spend their time, including community, health care, and home settings. These strategies include policy, systems, and environmental approaches; behavior change; and physical activity programs.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Approaches

- Community Design

Behavior Change

- Cognitive Behavioral Strategies
- Physical Activity Counseling

Physical Activity Programs

- Exercise Programs
- Lifestyle-Based Physical Activity Programs

Taking Action: Everyone Has a Role to Play

Everyone has a role to play in increasing physical activity levels among older adults and encouraging progress toward meeting the *Physical Activity Guidelines*. People in different sectors — including education; government; health care; housing; land use and community design; nonprofit; parks, recreation, and green space; public health; sports and fitness; and transportation — can all be involved in these efforts.

Professionals working with older adults one-on-one or in small-group settings are in key positions to support and encourage them to increase their physical activity levels through direct interactions and services.

- *Examples: exercise and health professionals; clinicians; gerontologists*

Organizations are uniquely positioned to create conditions for older adults to participate in physical activity through programming and interactions at various facilities and locations.

- *Examples: community, senior, or Tribal centers; health and fitness centers; cardiac rehabilitation facilities; hospital lifestyle and wellness centers; parks and recreation departments; faith-based institutions; senior living residences*

Community includes the design and atmosphere of public spaces that people can use for physical activity, such as active transportation and public transit infrastructure; parks, greenways, and trails; and other community design interventions.

- *Examples: civic associations; housing authorities; those involved in public works, urban planning, parks and recreation, transportation, and economic development*

Policymakers and decision-makers are responsible for creating laws, rules, regulations, codes, and funding at various levels of government; corporate policies; and institutional rules and policies. These can all support and promote more physical activity for older adults.

- *Examples: local and state government officials; Tribal leaders; public facility management, including schools and parks; health system administrators; health insurance companies*

When it comes to physical activity, something is always better than nothing, and it's important to help older adults find enjoyable and sustainable ways to build physical activity into their lifestyle. This report summarizes effective strategies for helping to increase physical activity levels among older adults. Whether an older adult is exceeding the key guidelines or just trying to move a little more each day, any increase in physical activity is positive and can help move the needle to improve their health and well-being.