



University of California
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SEDENTARY DEATH SYNDROME IS SECOND LARGEST THREAT TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Chronic diseases have increased dramatically because of physical inactivity. In the United States obesity has doubled since 1980, Type 2 diabetes has increased nine-fold since 1958, and heart disease remains the number one cause of death.

Sedentary Death Syndrome, or "SeDS," is the term developed by more than 200 of the nation's leading physiologists to diagnose the growing epidemic of physical inactivity and its relationship to chronic, preventable diseases. It is estimated that 60% of all Americans are currently at risk for SeDS, a condition that leads to premature disability or death. Approximately 2.5 million Americans will die prematurely in the next ten years due to SeDS, a number greater than all alcohol, guns, motor vehicles, illicit drug use and sexual behavior related deaths combined. These researchers call SeDS the second largest threat to public health.

Thirty-five known conditions are exacerbated by physical inactivity; they include: arthritis pain, arrhythmias, breast cancer, colon cancer, congestive heart failure, depression, gallstone disease, heart attack, hypertension, obesity, osteoporosis, peripheral vascular disease, respiratory problems, Type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea and stroke. Too many Americans delight in their inactivity, labeling themselves as "couch potatoes." They should know that they can decrease their risk of developing coronary heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes by 30 percent by adding only three hours of brisk walking per week. Jogging or more vigorous exercise decreases the risk of Type 2 diabetes by more than 50 percent.

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Regular exercise helps control weight, maintain bones and muscles, and increase strength and endurance.

Children are more sedentary than ever. They are increasingly overweight and obese, now showing fatty streaks in their arteries and developing type 2 diabetes, a disease formerly restricted to adults. Between 1980-1994, obesity in American children increased 100%. Studies indicate that currently one in four children are obese. Not surprising, considering the average American child spend 900 hours per year in school, but 1,023 hours watching television during the same period.

The problem is made worse by the fact that more than one-third of all young people between the ages of 12-21 do not regularly participate in vigorous physical activity. Daily participation in high school physical education dropped from 42 percent to 27 percent in 1007 according to the Center for Disease Control. The Surgeon General of the United States recently observed that, "We are raising the most overweight youngsters in American history."

Source: E-mail, May 31, 2001, Sedentary Death Syndrome Is Second Largest Threat to Public Health

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