

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Bush's *HealthierUS* Initiative is based on the premise that increasing personal fitness and becoming healthier is critical to achieving a better and longer life. Extensive research, much of it conducted or funded by the Federal Government, has shown that improving overall health, and thus preventing disease and premature death, is as easy as making small adjustments and improvements in the activities of daily life. The President's *HealthierUS* Initiative uses the resources of the Federal Government to alert Americans to the vital health benefits of simple and modest improvements in physical activity, nutrition, and behavior.

Nearly half of American adults report that they do not exercise at all, and seven out of 10 do so infrequently. Too many of America's youth do not exercise at all, are overweight, and have poor dietary habits. Five chronic diseases associated with obesity -- heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (e.g., bronchitis, emphysema, asthma), and diabetes -- account for more than two-thirds of all deaths in the United States. In addition to claiming more than 1.7 million American lives each year, these diseases hinder daily living for more than one of every 10 Americans, or 25 million people. More than 100 million Americans live with chronic disease, and millions of new cases are diagnosed each year.

Although these chronic diseases are among the most prevalent and deadly health problems facing our nation, some of them are very preventable. Effective measures exist today to prevent or delay much of the chronic disease burden and curtail its devastating consequences. Families can take simple, affordable steps to work physical activity, good nutrition, and behavior changes into their daily routine. You don't have to become a marathon runner or be able to afford a gym or health club membership to improve personal fitness. The health of Americans would improve with modest but regular physical activity and better eating habits.

People of all ages can benefit from these actions. For the nation's seniors, poor health should not be a foregone consequence of aging. Improvements in diet and physical activity can greatly improve the quality of life at any age. Regular physical activity also helps older Americans maintain joint strength and mobility and substantially delays the onset of functional limitations and loss of independence.

The Administration is announcing two actions to promote fitness:

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

An important step in communicating the Administration's message on fitness and health is the revitalization of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. Chaired by Lynn Swann, and vice-chaired by Dot Richardson, the Council will coordinate its activities with Federal, state, and private entities to serve communities across the country more effectively.

Agency-Wide Activities to Promote Personal Fitness.

The President is signing an Executive Order that directs certain Federal agencies to review all policies, programs, and regulations related to physical activity, nutrition, screenings, and making healthy choices. The agencies will propose revisions, modifications, or new actions to further improve the promotion of personal fitness, and forward the recommendations to the President within 90 days.

The *HealthierUS* Initiative is based on a very simple formula: every little bit of effort counts. The Administration has identified four keys for a healthier America and is taking the following actions to promote them:

- ***Be Physically Active Every Day.*** Many chronic diseases can be prevented with modest exercise, in some cases as simple as walking for half an hour. There are countless opportunities for physical activity that do not need to be strenuous or very time-consuming to be beneficial. Enjoy the outdoors with your children and family and show them that exercise can be fun and achievable. Administration actions to promote physical activity include:
 - Declaring a Fee-Free Weekend in America's National Parks and Federal Lands
 - Creating a HealthierUS.gov Web Site
 - Promoting the Use of Public Lands and Water
 - Highlighting the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

- ***Eat a Nutritious Diet.*** Americans should make simple adjustments to their diet and avoid excessive portions. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is a central part of a healthier diet, and good overall nutrition lowers the risk of getting heart disease, stroke, cancer, and osteoporosis. Administration actions to promote better nutrition include:
 - Enhancing the National 5 A Day for Better Health Program
 - Promoting Nutrition Curriculum and Education in Our Schools
 - Supporting the Eat Smart-Play Hard Campaign

- ***Get Preventive Screenings.*** Americans may be surprised to learn how a simple test like a cholesterol screen or a blood pressure check can reveal current health status and identify a need to adjust diet or behavior. Administration actions to promote preventive medicine include:
 - Creating the Healthy Communities Innovation Initiative
 - Raising Awareness of Diabetes Screening, Especially for Women
 - Strengthening and Improving Medicare

- ***Make Healthy Choices.*** Avoid tobacco and drugs and the abuse of alcohol and make smart and safe choices in your everyday life. Administration actions to promote healthy choices include:
 - Creating a CDC Tobacco Control Toolkit
 - Highlighting the Drug Free Communities Support Program
 - Promoting Bicycle Safety Initiatives