4 out of 5 Americans Don’t Meet Federal Exercise Guidelines

July 11, 2013

If you walk or run a few times a week, you might think you’re exercising enough to keep healthy. But the amount of time isn’t the only aspect of fitness. The type of activities you do is key. Our bodies need both aerobic and strength training, and studies show that many Americans aren’t getting enough of either, according to a new report published in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, a journal published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

For the report, CDC data were collected from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System’s annual phone survey with more than 450,000 U.S. adults, ages 18 and older.

The report showed that only 20 percent of U.S. adults are meeting the federal government’s guidelines for both aerobic and muscle strengthening exercises. But the good news is, nationwide, nearly 50 percent of adults are actually getting the recommended amount of aerobic activity every week. “This is a great foundation to build upon, but there is still much work to do,” said Carmen D. Harris, MPH, an epidemiologist in the CDC’s physical activity and health branch and contributor to the study.

Some of that effort will also need to address the more than 70 percent of participants who don’t engage in weekly strength training. (Muscle-strengthening exercises include push-ups, sit-ups or using resistance bands or weights.)

Harris added that “improving access to safe and convenient places where people can be physically active can help make the active choice the easy choice.”

Interestingly, report findings showed that the most conscientious exercisers in America lived in Colorado, where about 27 percent of all adults met federal exercise guidelines. Tennessee and West Virginia fared the worst in the study, with only 13 percent of people meeting guideline requirements. Researchers also found that women, Hispanics, the elderly and obese adults were all far less likely to meet the recommendations.

In general, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans suggest that each week adults get at least two and a half hours of moderate-intensity activity, such as walking, and one hour and 15 minutes of vigorous exercise, such as jogging or running.

Water workouts are a great way to combine both cardio and strength training in the same workout. Click here for tips on how you can get the most from your time poolside this summer.

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