



Message Points: Exercise and Energy Balance

Exercise and Weight Management

- There is strong evidence from the majority of the scientific literature that physical activity is an important component of an effective weight loss program.
- Physical activity is one of the most important behavioral factors in weight maintenance and improving long-term weight loss outcomes. In fact, participation in an exercise program has proven to be the very best predictor of maintaining weight that was lost.
- Effective weight loss and maintenance depend on a simple equation called energy balance: Calories expended through physical activity and normal lifestyle functions must exceed calories consumed.
- It is a myth that exercise can actually prevent weight loss by leading exercisers to overeat. Research and common sense disprove this notion. Look around the gym or the jogging trail. If this were the case, wouldn't those who regularly exercise be the fattest?

Other Benefits of Exercise

- Exercise and physical activity have been proven to help prevent chronic conditions such as heart disease, osteoporosis, anxiety, depression, obesity and diabetes.
- Studies show that when students are more active (through physical education, classroom activity, play, etc.) they improve test scores and attendance and experience fewer discipline problems and sick days.

Policy and economic implications

- Physical activity and exercise are key components of workplace wellness programs, which have been shown to return \$2.90 to \$5.96 in cost savings for every dollar invested by the employer. Participants in workplace wellness programs have reduced absenteeism, error rates and health care costs; they feel more alert, have better rapport with co-workers, and enjoy their work more.
- Physical activity and exercise must play a vital role in health system reform. Cost savings from healthy lifestyles can help fund broader coverage for the underserved.
- Stimulus funds designated for electronic medical records should include fields to record each patient's physical activity level. Exercise IS medicine and should be measured as a vital sign like blood pressure or cholesterol levels.

- Reimbursement for services such as healthy lifestyle counseling or clinical exercise physiologists could go a long way toward improving health and reducing health care costs.
- Physical activity needn't involve expensive equipment, gym memberships or team athletics. Simple activities like walking, accumulated in 10-minute bouts, can have significant benefits.
- Communities can do much to encourage physical activity by developing bike paths and walking trails, encouraging walkable neighborhoods, opening school facilities to after-school activities, and enacting other exercise-friendly policies.