Physical Activity

Physical inactivity is one of the most important risk factors for chronic disease in the United States, with more than 900,000 deaths annually attributed to poor diet and physical inactivity. Regular physical activity helps reduce the risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers; helps control weight; strengthens bones, muscles, and joints; prevents falls or helps reduce injuries from falls among older adults; and relieves anxiety and depression. People who live in communities that support active living are more likely to engage in physical activity as part of their daily routine, such as walking or biking for transportation.

Key facts about physical activity

Thirty percent of adults do not engage in regular physical activity each week. Only one-fifth of Dakota County students in all grades met the recommended level of physical activity (60 minutes per day) in 2016. Few Dakota County residents walk or bike to work or school.

Physical activity in adults

- Seventy percent of Dakota County adults 25 and older engaged in regular physical activity (150 minutes or more of aerobic activity per week through leisure time) (2014).
- In 2014, 26 percent of Dakota County adults 25 and older said they were moderately physically active 150-299 minutes per week.
- Nineteen percent of Dakota County adults reported no leisure-time physical activity during the previous month in 2014. Nationally, older adults, women, African-American adults and Hispanic adults are at risk for not getting enough physical activity.
- The 2008 CDC guidelines for physical activity recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity per week for adults.

Active living

- One percent of Dakota County residents 16 years and older who work walked or biked to work in 2015. Statewide, about four percent walked or biked to work.
- Sixty-six percent of Dakota County adults 25 and older rated their neighborhood as a very pleasant place to walk (2014).
- Fifty-seven percent of Dakota County adults 25 and older said it is very easy to safely cross the streets or roads in their neighborhood (2014).
- Twenty-two percent of Dakota County adults 25 and older said they have no sidewalks in their neighborhood (2014).
Physical activity in youth

- About one-fifth of Dakota County students reported engaging in 60 minutes of physical activity every day (2016: 21 percent of 5th and 8th graders, 18 percent of 9th graders and 15 percent of 11th graders).

- In 2016, Dakota County 5th and 9th graders were below the state for engaging in the recommended amount of physical activity; and 8th and 11th graders were similar to the state (statewide percents – 5th grade: 25 percent, 8th grade: 21 percent, 9th grade: 20 percent, and 11th grade: 15 percent).

- More males than females report engaging in the recommended amount of physical activity.

- Fifth and 8th graders were the most likely to engage in the recommended amount of physical activity.

- The 2008 CDC guidelines for physical activity recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous aerobic activity per day for children and adolescents.

Youth engaged in more “screen time”

- In 2013, 48 percent of 5th graders, 59 percent of 8th and 11th graders and 54 percent of 9th graders reported 10 or more hours of screen time per week. (Screen time refers to: watching TV, movies or videos on a TV, computer, or phone; playing video or online games; or using a computer.)

About this Community Health Profile

For more information about the Dakota County community health assessment, contact: Melanie Countryman, Epidemiologist (melanie.countryman@co.dakota.mn.us or 651-554-6131).

For more information:

- Active Living by Design www.activelivingbydesign.org
- MN Dept. of Health (MDH) www.health.state.mn.us
- President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports www.fitness.gov
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity
- Growing Healthy Kids in Dakota County www.DakotaCounty.us (search “Fitness and exercise”)

percent of students who report at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily

Source: Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team, Minnesota Student Survey