

# Exercise is Medicine<sup>®</sup> Month 2019 Toolkit

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Exercise  
is Medicine<sup>®</sup>

AMERICAN COLLEGE  
of SPORTS MEDICINE<sup>®</sup>

# About Exercise is Medicine®

## The Problem

Physical inactivity is a fast-growing public health problem and contributes to a variety of chronic diseases and health complications, including obesity, diabetes and cancer. In addition to improving a patient's overall health, increasing physical activity has proven effective in the treatment and prevention of chronic diseases. Even with all the benefits of physical activity, in the United States and many other countries, levels of inactivity are alarming. We are facing what is now referred to as an "inactivity epidemic," with tremendous costs.

- Nearly half of U.S. adults (46 percent) do not meet the recommendations for aerobic physical activity, and nearly one-third (30 percent) report doing less than 10 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week.
- In a study of older adolescents and adults in the U.S., participants spent almost eight hours a day in sedentary behaviors, while as much as 36 percent of adults engaged in no leisure-time physical activity at all.
- Globally, physical inactivity costs health care systems 54 billion dollars, productivity losses of 14 billion, and 13.4 million disability-adjusted life years.
- 40 percent of U.S. primary care doctors and 36 percent of U.S. medical students do not meet 2008 federal physical activity guidelines. Physically inactive doctors are less likely to provide exercise counseling to patients and provide less credible role models for the adoption of healthy behaviors. Not surprisingly, only 34 percent of U.S. adults report having received exercise counseling at their last medical visit.

## The Benefits

Many research studies have shown the benefits of regular physical activities. The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and many studies show that 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity is required to achieve these health benefits, although it also states that inactive individuals "can achieve substantial health gains by increasing their activity even if they do not reach the target range."

Regular physical activity can:

- Higher levels of leisure-time physical activity are associated with a reduced risk of developing 13 cancers, including esophageal adenocarcinoma, liver, lung, kidney, gastric cardia, endometrial, myeloid leukemia, myeloma, colon, head and neck, rectal, bladder and breast.
- Resistance training improves chemotherapy completion rates in breast cancer patients receiving therapy.
- Strong evidence suggests that physical activity can reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, as well as improve cognition.
- Physical activity or fitness reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD), with a magnitude of risk reduction comparable to that of not smoking.
- Lower the risk of stroke by 34 percent.
- Lower the risk of developing type II diabetes by 58 percent and by 71 percent for people >60 years old.
- Be twice as effective in treating type II diabetes as the standard insulin prescription and can save \$2275 per person per year when compared to the cost of standard drug treatment.
- Can decrease depression as effectively as Prozac or behavioral therapy.
- Adults with better muscle strength have a 20 percent lower risk of mortality (33 percent lower risk of cancer specific mortality) than adults with low muscle strength.

- A low level of fitness is a bigger risk factor for mortality than mild-moderate obesity. It is better to be fit and overweight than unfit with a lower percentage of body fat.
- Regular physical activity has been shown to lead to higher SAT scores for adolescents.
- Research has shown positive associations between physical activity participation and on-task behavior in elementary school students.

## **Co-Benefits of Physical Activity and Exercise**

- Improvement of individual health and quality of life.
- Economic savings through reduced health care costs (and, for active transport, saving on auto expenses).
- Reduced environmental impact through active transport.
- Increased work productivity, reduced absenteeism; worker cooperation, attitude, etc.
- Higher academic achievement among students.
- Improved cognitive function in children, youth, adults & older adults.

## **A Solution to the Greatest Public Health Problem of the 21st Century**

Exercise is Medicine® (EIM), a global health initiative managed by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) is focused on encouraging health care providers to include exercise when designing treatment plans for patients. EIM is committed to the belief that exercise and physical activity are integral to the prevention and treatment of chronic disease and should be regularly assessed as part of medical care. Along with the National Physical Activity Plan, EIM strives to make physical activity a “vital sign” that is routinely assessed at every patient interaction with a health care provider.

## **A Critical Call to Action**

EIM calls on each person and partner organization dedicated to build, support and advocate for physical activity as essential for global health and wellbeing by committing to action. Policy makers are called to change policy to support physical activity as a vital sign for health. Health care providers and fitness professionals are called to integrate exercise into every patient and client interaction. Communities, workplaces and schools are called to promote physical activity as an essential part of health and well-being.

## **Exercise is Medicine® Month Background Information**

### **Rx for Health: A Daily Dose of Exercise! May is Exercise is Medicine® Month**

Health advocates and public officials around the world are getting it, with growing movements on six continents and EIM National Centers in 32 countries. In the U.S., with alarming increases in chronic diseases and consternation over health care costs, many see the EIM initiative as part of the solution.

Each May, communities throughout the U.S. will hold activities that recognize physical activity and exercise—shown to help prevent and treat more than 40 chronic diseases—should be part of everyone’s health care plan. Since 2010, EIM Month has been proclaimed by mayors, governors, Congress and the President. Individuals and organizations of all kinds, from youth groups to universities, churches, fitness centers, corporations and hospitals, hold events aimed at keeping people active and healthy.

Though EIM is a global initiative, EIM Month is a grassroots, community-based phenomenon. Families and advocates—anyone who “gets it”—are empowered to encourage healthy lifestyles and help make physical activity part of everyone’s health care plan. From physicians who prescribe exercise to public officials seeking to build healthy communities to insurers wanting to control health care costs to parents who want to keep their kids healthy, EIM Month is a time to put into action what research has shown to be true.

“Everyone should start or renew an exercise program now as an investment in life-long health,” said Robert E. Sallis, M.D., FACSM, past president of ACSM whose presidential initiative bred EIM. “Every person, regardless of age or health, is responsible for his or her own physical activity. There are far more reasons to exercise than excuses not to.”

## Get Involved! May is Exercise is Medicine® Month

May marks the 11th annual Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) Month. Now it is easier than ever to participate. Here’s how you can get involved:

- Access the latest resources for health care [providers](#). These resources can help you forge a connection between health care and existing physical activity resources.
  - EIM has several resources specifically for health care providers
    - \* [The EIM Summary Sheet](#) provides a simple snapshot that guides the provider through the rationale behind EIM, using the Physical Activity Vital Sign (PAVS), and a description of the National Physical Activity Guidelines that they can use with their patients.
    - \* [The EIM Rx Form](#) provides the health care provider with a simple tool for prescribing physical activity to their patients based on national guidelines, providing information on the types of activity a patient can engage in and how they can get started.
  - [The Health Care Providers’ Action Guide](#) is a simple and effective tool to help you prescribe PA in the right “dosage.” Associated forms and templates are also available in the guide. Key tools in the guide include simple tips for starting the conversation about PA with patients, safety screening tools and instructions, Physical Activity Vital Sign (PAVS) questionnaire, EIM Physical Activity Prescription Form, and referral tools to help get patients to qualified exercise professionals
    - \* [Rx for Health Series](#) provides essential guidelines on exercise for sedentary individuals and those with various chronic diseases and medical conditions. These handouts are designed to be used by health care providers and exercise professionals to support physical activity recommendations to patients/clients.
- If you work on a university or college campus, get involved by bringing EIM Month to your school!
  - For more information on how to register your campus and to learn about potential activities that you can do on your campus, [click here](#) or email [eim@acsm.org](mailto:eim@acsm.org).
- Not a health care provider or on a university campus? Other ways that you can be involved include:
  - Become an EIM Credentialed exercise professional. The EIM Credential recognizes you as a professional who possesses the education and skills to work closely with the health care community and referred patients, including those with common chronic diseases and health conditions. Visit [www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified](http://www.acsm.org/get-stay-certified) for more information.

- Read through and utilize suggestions in our [EIM Exercise Professionals' Action Guide](#). You will find information on exercise prescription, the referral process, and much more. Be sure to use the guide's sample forms and templates to optimize opportunities to build credibility and work with health care professionals in your community.

## Other Ways to Be Involved

### The EIM Solution – Share EIM with Your Health System and Community Leaders

To jointly address the rapid progression of chronic diseases and skyrocketing health care costs, EIM and ACSM, along with the American Council on Exercise (ACE) and the Medical Fitness Association (MFA) announced in February 2016 a new collaboration called the Exercise is Medicine Solution. The partnership and the EIM Solution encourage health care systems, clinicians, fitness professionals to come together with community resources to affect positive health outcomes and reduce health care costs. To learn more about the EIM Solution, [click here](#).

### Become an EIM Advocate

- Sign up for EIM updates at [www.exerciseismedicine.org](http://www.exerciseismedicine.org). Click on the “Newsletter Sign Up” (top right corner) to receive updates, ideas and resources for integrating EIM into your professional life.
- For updates on EIM and other ways to participate, follow us on:
  - Twitter: @EIMnews
  - Facebook: Exercise is Medicine

### EIM Credential

Exercise is Medicine® offers a credential program that recognizes exercise professionals who possess the education and skills to work closely with the health care community and referred patients, including those with common chronic diseases and health conditions. The credential signifies that an exercise professional is part of the EIM initiative and can safely and effectively guide patients who need specialized fitness programming to change their health behaviors and improve health outcomes. The EIM Credential currently features three levels:

- Levels 1 & 2: These credentialed exercise professionals may work with individuals who are healthy or who have health-related issues but have been cleared by their physicians for exercise.
- Level 3: These credentialed exercise professionals may work with patients who require clinical support and monitoring.

For more information on the EIM Credential and how to get signed up, [click here](#).

## Exercise is Medicine® On Campus Facts

Exercise is Medicine® On Campus (EIM-OC) calls upon universities and colleges to promote physical activity as a vital sign of health. EIM-OC encourages faculty, staff and students to work together toward improving the health and well-being of the campus community by:

- Making movement a part of the daily campus culture
- Assessing physical activity at every student health visit
- Providing students with the tools necessary to strengthen healthy physical activity habits that can last a lifetime
- Connecting university health care providers with university health fitness specialists to provide a referral system for exercise prescription.

### Get Involved

Visit [Exercise is Medicine®](#) to support the initiative and receive program updates. Download the [EIM-OC Action Guide](#), which provides tips and tools to implement EIM on your campus and get your school moving.

### References:

#### [EIM Fact Sheet](#)

1. Diehl, K., Mayer, M., Mayer, F., Gorig, T., Bock, C., Herr, R. M., & Schneider, S. (2015). Physical activity counseling by primary care physicians: attitudes, knowledge, implementation, and perceived success. *Journal of physical activity & health*, 12(2).
2. Lobelo F, Young D, Sallis B, et al. Routine assessment and promotion of physical activity in healthcare settings: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2018 May 1; 137:e495–e522. doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000559.