



NEW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR MAJOR GOVERNMENT PREVENTIVE HEALTH STRATEGY

A new report that finds Australians are not spending enough time being physically active highlights the need for action on a national, long-term preventive health strategy, AMA President, Dr Omar Khorshid, said today.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report found that the majority of Australians of all ages are not meeting the minimum levels of physical activity required for health benefits, and are exceeding recommended limits on sedentary behaviour.

Dr Khorshid said the findings were concerning, but not surprising.

“The impact of bushfire smoke during the 2019-20 summer meant that millions of Australians spent significant time indoors. Even professional sporting events were cancelled,” Dr Khorshid said.

“This was followed immediately by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced community sporting events to be cancelled, gyms to be closed, and social gatherings limited. The unfortunate outcome of this is reduced physical activity.

“While we want all Australians to remain cautious and continue to act in accordance with COVID-19 guidelines, there are many options for increasing our physical activity. If you are uncertain about what options are safe for you, discuss it with your GP.”

The AMA is working with the Federal Government on its proposed long-term national preventive health strategy, which was first announced in a video message by Health Minister Greg Hunt in a video message to the 2019 AMA National Conference almost 18 months ago.

“As a nation, we spend woefully too little on preventive health – only about 2 per cent of the overall health budget,” Dr Khorshid said.

“A properly resourced preventive health strategy, including national public education campaigns on issues such as smoking and obesity, is vital to helping Australians improve their lifestyles and quality of life.

“We strongly encourage anyone who wants to increase their physical activity to speak to their GP. Your GP can provide the right advice to support you to sustainably increase your physical activity.”

Background:

According to the AIHW report:

- Physical inactivity was responsible for 2.5 per cent of the total disease burden in 2015 and contributed 10–20 per cent of the individual disease burden from diabetes, bowel cancer, uterine cancer, dementia, breast cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke.
- Only 17 per cent of 2–5 year olds, 12 per cent of children and 2 per cent of adolescents met the physical activity and screen-based behaviour guidelines in 2011–12.
- 15 per cent of adults met both the physical activity and muscle strengthening activity guidelines in 2017–18.
- 1 in 2 adults (55 per cent) did not meet the physical activity guidelines in 2017–18.

The AIHW report is available here: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/risk-factors/insufficient-physical-activity/contents/insufficient-physical-activity>

23 October 2020

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