

Lack of physical activity among youth can contribute to obesity. Many physical education programs in schools are severely limited. Therefore, daily physical activity is not something adolescents typically participate in unless they are involved in a sport or an intramural program. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 recommends that children and adolescents should engage in 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week.³³

- Nationally, major decreases in vigorous physical activity occur during grades nine-12, particularly for girls. By 11th grade, more than half of female students are not participating regularly in vigorous physical activity.⁹
- Physical activity declines dramatically during adolescence. Nearly half of American youths 12 to 21 years of age are not vigorously active on a regular basis. Participation in regular physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, control weight, build lean muscle, reduce fat, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety and promote psychological well-being.³⁴
- In the long term, regular physical activity decreases the risk of dying prematurely, dying of heart disease and developing diabetes, colon cancer and high blood pressure.³⁴
- Nationally, daily participation in physical education class has dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 28 percent in 2003.³⁴
- School physical education classes can increase student participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity and help students develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to engage in lifelong physical activity.³⁵

HP 2010 Objectives:

- 22-07: Increase the proportion of adolescents who engage in vigorous physical activity that promotes cardio-respiratory fitness three or more days per week for 20 or more minutes to at least 85 percent.