

Doctors should routinely evaluate patients' physical activity habits

14 October 2013

Doctors should evaluate your physical activity habits as routinely as checking your blood pressure and other risk factors for cardiovascular diseases, the American Heart Association recommends in a scientific statement published in its journal *Circulation*.

"Most healthcare providers have not routinely assessed [physical activity](#) levels among their patients because they have not had the right tools," said Scott Strath, Ph.D., lead author of the statement and associate professor in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's College of Health Sciences. "Yet, physical inactivity is about as bad for you as smoking."

The new statement includes a "decision matrix" to help providers select the most appropriate evaluation method for their patients, including low-cost or no-cost options, such as questionnaires that patients complete when they arrive for their appointment.

An exercise checkup should cover types, frequency, duration and intensity of physical activity at work, home and during leisure time, the statement said.

Doctors should also counsel patients on how to include more exercise in their daily lives and do a physical activity assessment as part of routine medical care, Strath said.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity five days a week or more, or at least 20 minutes of vigorous [aerobic activity](#) three days a week or more. You should also do moderate- to high-intensity muscle strengthening at least two days a week.

Provided by American Heart Association

APA citation: Doctors should routinely evaluate patients' physical activity habits (2013, October 14)
retrieved 27 May 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-10-doctors-routinely-patients-physical-habits.html>

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