



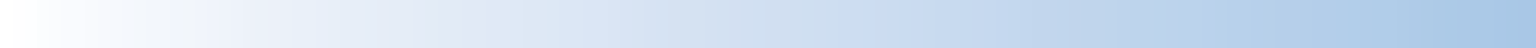
# USER'S GUIDE

Promoting the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans  
in Your Community: A Guide to Building Awareness and Participation



*2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans  
Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!*





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Together, we can help  
Americans become more  
physically active.



# 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Outreach

**Being physically active is one of the most important things Americans can do to improve their health. Physical activity is linked with many positive health benefits, including lowering risk of early death and a number of chronic diseases and conditions. Physical activity also gives people the opportunity to have fun, enjoy the outdoors, and be with family and friends.**

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans are the first-ever comprehensive physical activity guidelines published by the Federal Government. The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provide recommendations that Americans aged 6 and older can use to help themselves become physically active on a regular basis. HHS has released the Guidelines as a way to help Americans enhance their quality of life and reduce the personal, social, and economic costs of inactivity.

Together with your commitment to promoting the Guidelines we will:

- Create public awareness
- Inform people about the many benefits of regular physical activity
- Make opportunities available to boost physical activity among Americans
- Aim to build consumer confidence and social support for being active
- Offer people a variety of ways to add physical activity into their lives

By working together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to encourage Americans of all ages and abilities to be more active.

We encourage all organizations with physical activity as part of their mission to sign up and be listed as a Supporter of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. For more information, please visit: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines).



# What Can You Do?

## As a Supporter, all you need to do is

- Tell your community about the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and the benefits of regular physical activity.
- Offer people in your community information and ideas about how they can meet the Guidelines.

We want your organization to actively engage your community and encourage participation in all forms of physical activity. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Toolkit offers ideas and tools your organization can use to help everyone build physical activity into their lives.

Visit [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines) to register as a Supporter. You can access toolkit materials there and post a link to your organization's Web site.



# For Those Already Promoting Physical Activity

Use the materials in this toolkit to complement what your organization is doing now to encourage Americans to make healthier lifestyle choices. How you use the toolkit is up to you. Even if your physical activity program materials have their own look, consider adding a statement to your materials that says your organization is a Supporter of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

## Encourage Americans to “Be Active Your Way.”





# About This User's Guide

## Your Role: The Critical Link to Reaching Our Audience

### Section 1

is a description of toolkit items, identifying each and offering suggestions about how your organization can use these items for outreach.

### Section 2

identifies the target audience.

### Section 3

discusses simple messages to use when providing information about the Guidelines.

### Section 4

outlines steps that your organization can take to promote the Guidelines locally. We offer creative ideas to help you build “buzz.”

### Section 5

outlines a broad range of promotional activities for those organizations that have a strong media relations program and can take full advantage of the items in the toolkit.



# Section 1: About the Physical Activity Guidelines Toolkit

You can use the toolkit in many ways to highlight the Guidelines. Some organizations may use one or two items, while others might take full advantage of many items in the kit.

The toolkit contains materials that will help you get the message out about the importance of being physically active and encourage people in your community to get the amount of physical activity they need, based on the Guidelines and their own goals.



## Toolkit Contents:

### 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans



The primary audiences for this document are policymakers and health professionals. It is provided in the toolkit as a reference for your programs and activities.

### Be Active Your Way: A Guide for Adults



This booklet was developed for adults aged 18 to 64 years who are not meeting the Guidelines but are thinking about or planning to do so. It provides encouraging, realistic, and helpful messages about the Guidelines. Distribute it to adults who currently participate in your organization's activities and in places such as recreational centers, health care facilities, grocery stores, movie theaters, places of worship, and area libraries.

### Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults



This fact sheet provides the basic information in the Guidelines in a brief, readable format. It also gives examples of physical activity to help people get started.

# Get the message out to Americans about how much physical activity they need.

## Posters (4)



Display these posters in high-visibility areas of your organization.

## Event Flyers (4)



You can use these flyers to announce the date, time, and place of your activities that promote the Guidelines.

## At-A-Glance: A Fact Sheet for Professionals



Designed for fitness and health professionals, this is a one-page desk reference that contains the Guidelines for all population groups and the health benefits of physical activity, as supported by the scientific evidence.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) provide positive, simple, and consistent responses to many of the questions you and/or your organization may encounter as you enhance the awareness and visibility of the Guidelines. We encourage you to use these questions as a base, while adding others that are most appropriate for your mission and outreach.



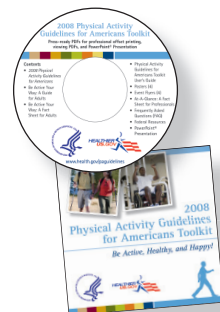
## Federal Resources



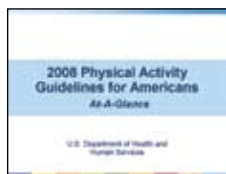
Find valuable information, programs, and resources from Federal agencies about physical activity.

## CD-ROM of Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Toolkit Materials

This contains easy-to-use electronic files of the toolkit items. Your organization can reproduce these materials by taking them to a professional printing company.



## PowerPoint® Presentation



Give presentations about the Guidelines to businesses, other community organizations, and individuals in your community. This tool can be used to promote your organization to a wider audience, and to highlight your Guidelines-related programs and activities.

Use the toolkit to  
highlight the Guidelines.



**Toolkit materials are available for download  
at [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines).**



# Section 2: Audiences

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans includes different guidance recommendations for Americans in each of several groups of the population including: youth, adults, older adults, and individuals with special considerations.

Regular physical activity is important for all Americans. The “Federal Resources” list supplied with this toolkit contains sample programs and complementary materials appropriate for other

population groups such as youth and older adults. Additional resources can be found at [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines) and [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov).

The target population for the Be Active Your Way Guide and Fact Sheet for Adults is adult men and women aged 18 to 64 who are not meeting the Guidelines but are thinking about doing so or planning to be more physically active. These materials are geared *primarily, though not exclusively*, to individuals who are not regularly physically active.





Guidance recommendations are  
for Americans aged  
6 years and older.



# Section 3: Messages That Promote the Guidelines

Our goal for the Guidelines outreach is to communicate a clear, consistent message that will encourage and inspire Americans to be more active. The main message we are conveying is to ask Americans to “Be Active Your Way.” This message communicates that people have choices and can design their own way of meeting the Guidelines.

We have conducted focus group research to determine successful messages that promote the Guidelines. Our focus group research indicates that the target population is most responsive to four simple message themes:

- Benefits
- Self-efficacy

- Social support
- Ways to fit physical activity into daily life

We recommend using messages that stress the **benefits** of regular physical activity, highlight **self-efficacy**, promote **social support** and nearby resources, and suggest simple ways to fit **physical activity into daily life**. In addition, we encourage you to regularly use the tagline for the Guidelines: “Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!”

Following are sample talking points that your organization can incorporate as you promote the Guidelines. We encourage you to weave them into whatever communication tools your organization uses—for example, flyers, newsletters, e-mails, and advertisements. These talking points are designed to speak to a wide variety of audiences, from the media to members of your community.

Encourage and inspire  
Americans to be  
more active.





## Benefits

- All Americans should engage in regular physical activity to improve overall health and to reduce risk of many health problems.
- Some physical activity is better than none. The more you do, the more you gain.
- “Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!”

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes. For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases. For adults, examples of these benefits include:

- Lower risk of early death
- Lower risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and several associated risk factors
- Weight loss and prevention of weight gain

- Lower risk of certain cancers (including colon and breast cancer)
- Improved bone health
- Reduced depression

Encourage adults to personalize the benefits of regular physical activity. Other reasons people may be active include:

- Improving personal appearance
- Having fun and enjoying the outdoors
- Serving as a good role model for children
- Enjoying time with family and friends
- Enhancing fitness for sports
- Retaining one’s ability to live independently



## Self-Efficacy

- Physical activity—who says it has to be hard?
- “If I can do it, you can too.”

Self-efficacy refers to the belief or confidence in one’s ability to improve behavior, in this case to increase physical activity. It is important not only to provide adults with the key guidelines but to help them take action. An important part of the Guidelines is to encourage adults who are currently inactive to start incorporating physical activity into their daily lives *slowly*. They can then gradually increase physical activity over a period of weeks to months to meet the Guidelines. Setting small goals and meeting those goals can improve self-efficacy and ultimately result in higher levels of physical activity.

For example: An inactive person could start with a walking program consisting of 5 minutes of slow walking several times each day, 5 to 6 days a week. The length of time walking and the walking speed could slowly be increased until the Guidelines are reached several weeks later.

## Social Support

- “It’s more fun to walk, bike, or run with a friend.”
- There are many people and organizations near you that offer opportunities and support to help you be more active.

During our focus groups, many adults recognized the social aspects of engaging in physical activity. Promote social support and socialization as ways to help motivate adults to be more active. We encourage you to call on more physically active adults to serve as role models, mentors, and buddies to less active adults.



“Show us examples of physical activities that are fun and enjoyable.”  
—Focus group participant

## Ways To Fit Physical Activity Into Your Life

- “Be Active Your Way.”
- Who says physical activity has to be hard?

In our focus groups, adults emphasized the importance of being provided with many examples of each type of physical activity. Consider offering tips. People want to find ways to build physical activity into their lives. Focus group participants asked that they be provided examples of physical activities that were fun and enjoyable.

Provide several examples as a way to allow individuals to choose activities that fit into their lifestyles and seem realistic for them. According to our focus group research, it is also important to emphasize that the Guidelines can be met by doing 10- to 15-minute bouts of physical activity instead of doing it all at once. Finally, it is important to make physical activity fun and enjoyable.

### Be a Resource

For example: [name of your organization] is a participating local Supporter of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. We are available to give you the support and practical suggestions you need to get started on increasing your physical activity.



*“I start out doing  
10–15 minutes at a time.”*



# Section 4: Ways To Share the Guidelines With Your Community

Supporters can raise awareness about the importance of regular physical activity by taking simple steps. Here are a few examples:

- Contact your colleagues. Ask friendly organizations in your community (such as recreation centers, social service or health agencies, places of worship, and grocery stores) to list announcements about your activities promoting the Guidelines in their newsletters, on their bulletin boards, or in other communications they use to reach their clientele.
- Display one of the posters. Hang it in your facility to encourage physical activity.
- Hold a seminar. Conduct a brief seminar over a well-balanced lunch and invite members of your community to attend. Have a physical activity speaker talk about the merits of staying active and offer practical tips. Pass out copies of the Be Active Your Way Guide and/or Fact Sheet for Adults.



- Submit a press release. Submit a press release to local metropolitan daily newspapers, radio and television stations, and to various community weeklies. Especially consider sending press releases to reporters who focus on health topics, and follow up these submissions with friendly phone calls. Urge the reporters to include the announcement in their publications or on-air programming, at the very least. Also invite them to visit your facility and to interview staff and clientele who are becoming involved in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans outreach.

Raise awareness about  
the importance of  
regular physical activity.



# Section 5: Options for Media and Public Relations Activities

Some participating organizations will have greater capacity to mount a wide-ranging and sustained effort to promote the Guidelines in their communities. This User's Guide is designed to give you a large menu of options from which you can choose according to your organization's needs and resources.

## Internal Outreach: Creating Excitement From Within

Support from within an organization is crucial to the success of any outreach. Buy-in from internal stakeholders (e.g., your staff, volunteers, allies from other groups, and board of directors) will help increase overall awareness of the Guidelines as staff and leadership spread the word to their constituents and external partners. Ultimately, you will depend on these on-the-ground “ambassadors” to pass out new literature, explain the value of the Guidelines, and assist in evaluating the success of your efforts. Here are some ways to engage and sustain the support of internal audiences:

- E-mail lists. Create a physical activity Listserv or e-mail distribution list of all those who may serve as advocates and champions of the Guidelines. Provide regular communication about Guidelines outreach activities and use this channel to encourage coordination among staff and relevant partners.
- Newsletters. Produce a content-rich monthly report that highlights best practices, success stories, and upcoming events and activities supporting the Guidelines. If your organization produces a newsletter, take the opportunity to incorporate information about the Guidelines and various ways for staff members to become more active. Refer newsletter recipients to Supporter organizations and resources, where staff can learn more about ways to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.
- Flyer. Develop and distribute flyers (print and/or electronic versions) announcing upcoming activities, seminars, or workshops. Encourage your organization's staff to disseminate this information through every available channel and to recruit individuals throughout the community.
- Announcement boards. Post announcements about upcoming related events on bulletin boards where staff and program participants can easily view them. Showcase information and photographs from previous events on announcement boards to encourage involvement in future activities. You might also use the announcement boards to highlight staff members who have been particularly instrumental in promoting and supporting the program (e.g., “Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Champion of the Month”).



## External Outreach: Utilizing Media and Public Relations

Incorporate our key messages into information about your activities and share them with the media. This can be a powerful and cost-effective way to reach the public. Send press releases or call specific reporters to pitch story ideas, or offer editors a bylined article, letter to the editor, or op-ed (Opposite the Editorial article), for publication from one of your leaders.

### Checklist for Getting Started

- Research the media in your area (local television, radio, community newspapers, church bulletins, school papers, etc.) that would be interested in covering health related stories.
- Consider other local leaders (e.g., political leaders, physicians and nurses, retired athletes) in your area who would be interested in your story and who would enthusiastically share your message.
- Determine the types of communication that would be most appropriate for each media outlet (telephone call, e-mail, press release, op-ed, advertisement, direct mail, etc.).

- Brainstorm various ways to increase media coverage (host an event, invite reporters to moderate or sit in on a seminar or workshop, etc.).
- Develop a plan for periodically bringing local media up to date on your activities and accomplishments with regard to the Guidelines.

### Building Relationships With Media To Raise Awareness About the Guidelines

Local publications tend to be small and understaffed. Consequently, they are constantly in search of compelling stories or exciting news. As chronic disease accounts for a large percentage of all American deaths and because obesity is a rapidly growing problem in this country, many journalists are now more interested in covering these issues. Your organization's involvement in the outreach of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans will likely get their attention, as they offer simple and solid solutions to help prevent or delay chronic disease and obesity. Use the Guidelines to draw attention to the fact that physical activity has a profound effect on health.



# Use the Guidelines to draw attention to the fact that physical activity has a profound effect on health.

Familiarize yourself with the publications and other media outlets that serve your community and the editors and reporters who work there. Identify those reporters and editors who might cover health topics. Introduce yourself to them and stay in touch on at least an occasional basis to remind them that your organization is an information resource for them. Make their jobs easier by shaping the information about the Guidelines as clearly and concisely as possible. Their readers are your target audiences, and like you, these reporters and editors feel an obligation to publicize issues that affect the local community.

## Checklist for Utilizing the Media: Building Strong Relationships

- Be mindful and respectful of reporters' and editors' deadlines. Try to find out what days or what times of day are most convenient to contact specific media representatives who would likely be interested in the Guidelines. Keep this information on file so that it is available to all your staff members.
- Be responsive. If you receive a media inquiry, return the call as soon as possible.
- Demonstrate a willingness to provide reporters with useful information and credible sources concerning the Guidelines.
- Train spokespersons who can talk articulately and concisely about your organization's role in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans outreach.
- Stick closely to the universal messages whenever you discuss the Guidelines with media.
- Communicate your health and physical activity related story in a straightforward manner, providing reporters with specific information they have requested.
- Pitch the right people the right story. Make sure to research the most appropriate contact for a particular story and be prepared to offer compelling, newsworthy, and accurate information.
- Provide frequent updates and establish a pattern for continuous and regular contact.
- Make useful information available on your organization's Web site. Add information and links to your organization's existing Web site that promotes regular physical activity. Consider linking to the Guidelines Web site at [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines). Highlight descriptions of workshops and seminars offered throughout the community and maintain a calendar of upcoming events and activities. Enable staff members and partners to post testimonials about their involvement, recruitment efforts, and successes.





## Media Tools and Methods for Effective Outreach

Before contacting a reporter or editor, it is valuable to develop media tools that tell the press what is new, interesting, and exciting about your organization's involvement in the outreach associated with the Guidelines.

### Media Tools

- **Press releases.** Issuing a press release is a quick and effective way to publicize a specific event or activity that your organization is sponsoring to promote the Guidelines as a way to encourage people in your community to become more physically active. Press releases are most often used with print media. If you are communicating with a television or radio station, you will probably want to send a personalized letter. However, the station may request a press release for further information on the event.
- **Fact sheets.** Fact sheets will provide basic, objective, detailed information about the Guidelines. Usually a single page, a fact sheet supplements the information in a pitch letter or news release. It adds credibility to any accompanying public service announcements, media kits, op-ed pieces, or other timely materials. In addition, reporters may not have time to read over all the materials, so an easy-to-read, bulleted fact sheet can facilitate coverage.
- **Letters to the editor.** Letters to the editor provide an easy way for you to voice your opinion to policymakers and to educate people in the community about physical activity issues. Use these response letters to correct facts in an inaccurate or biased news article, to explain the connection between a news item and your activities, or to praise or criticize a relevant article. You may send the editor as many different letters on the same subject as you have allies to write and sign them. Keep it simple and brief. Most newspapers have requirements for length—usually no more than about 200 words, which is about one double-spaced typed page of text. Most important, don't be discouraged if your letter is not printed. Keep trying. You may want to submit a revised letter with a different angle on the issue at a later date.



- **Op-eds.** Op-eds express a strong opinion on an issue, backed by well-researched, documented facts. While a letter to the editor provides a concise and direct response to a specific article or broadcast, the op-ed is more detailed, and may incorporate more than one article or study. We recommend that you ask a board member or a local politician to sign the op-ed. The prominence of the signee will go a long way toward improving your chances of getting the piece published, but even more important is his or her credibility or recognized authority to offer the opinion.
- **Desk-side briefings.** Arrange in-person meetings with reporters to introduce yourself and provide background on the Guidelines. This is a great opportunity to give reporters a fact sheet, press release, or any other basic information you have about your organization's efforts and successes in engaging in the Guidelines outreach.
- **Editorial board meetings.** Arrange meetings about the Guidelines with the editorial boards of local community publications to familiarize them with your organization's activities and events. The more useful information you can provide in this one-on-one setting about the Guidelines, the greater the likelihood of generating media interest.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs).** Like advertisements, PSAs are an effective means to communicate a focused message. PSAs come in print, radio, or television formats. Working with a local television station or production company, consider developing 15- and 30-second PSAs that feature a prominent spokesperson and/or local personalities who have benefited from physical activity. Remember that testimonials from adults who meet the Guidelines are particularly effective in motivating less active adults to get involved in the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans outreach.



## Publicizing Events

- Supporter promotions with media. If you are planning a high-profile rollout event to showcase the Guidelines, you may want to explore various sponsorship opportunities with local media. In return for helping to publicize the event, you would offer various media outlets the opportunity to become in-kind sponsors. Specific benefits might include the opportunity to display the outlet's logo on event signage, T-shirts, and various printed materials; feature its reporters or on-air personalities at public events; and present awards to noteworthy participants. To enhance your chances of garnering interest in the Guidelines, be sure to contact media outlets that have a good track record in being involved in community service programs (many local TV and radio stations have a special interest in promoting health care awareness). With such a partnership, you can leverage a great deal of publicity free of charge for your work.
- Community events. Whether you are considering a physical activity seminar or workshop, a contest or award ceremony, community events are a wonderful way to generate local interest in the Guidelines and promote physical activity. These events provide not only an excellent forum for generating visibility but an opportunity for educating target audiences about the wide array of services offered through your organization. This type of informational outreach should be supported by success stories highlighting the achievements of people who have improved their health, changed their exercise habits, boosted their energy levels, and generally improved their overall quality of life. Each event presents an opportunity for your organization to promote physical activity.

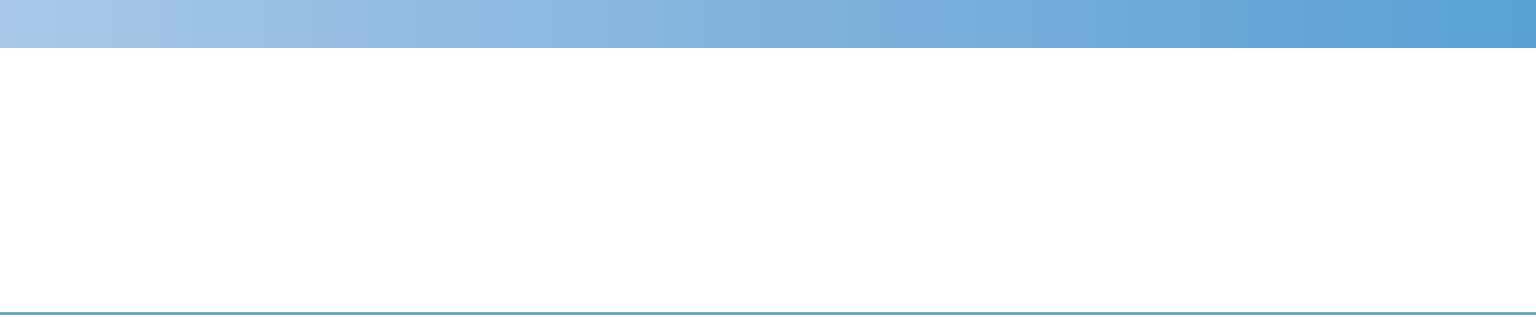
Community events are a  
wonderful way to generate  
local interest in the Guidelines.

# Regular physical activity needs to be made an easy choice for Americans.

**Specific promotional opportunities may include but should not be limited to the following:**

- Challenge events. Publicize your organization's participation by making it a community event. Kick off this friendly competition by announcing the competition theme, goal, and activities during a press conference. Follow the press conference with a 30-minute walk.
- Press conferences with political leaders. Ask your mayor or governor to speak about the importance of the Guidelines and physical activity for Americans. Invite members of your community, as well as local press representatives.
- Contests and award ceremonies. Host a contest that culminates in a high-profile awards ceremony to recognize exceptional participants and program organizers.





# Conclusion

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans provide essential guidance to help Americans achieve the health benefits of regular physical activity. However, providing guidance by itself is not enough to produce change. Action is necessary. Regular physical activity needs to be made the easy choice for Americans. To accomplish this goal, public health research suggests the use of a “socio-ecologic” approach. This comprehensive approach involves action at all levels of society: individual, inter-personal, organizational, community, and public policy. This User’s Guide has given you a range of ideas for generating interest and participation in your organization’s activities.

Reap the following rewards by promoting the Physical Activity Guidelines outreach message throughout your community and use this opportunity to:

- Enhance your leadership role within your local community.
- Highlight your current physical activity programs and activities.
- Promote your organization to a wider audience.
- Demonstrate your commitment to promoting the health of the people you serve.
- Receive recognition for your efforts.

**Together, we can help Americans become more physically active.**

If you would like more information, we encourage you to visit: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines).

**Be Active, Healthy, and Happy!**



# Acknowledgments

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You can find more information about the new advice on physical activity at: [www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines).

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