

Strength Training Levels Fall Short of National Goal

More U.S. men and women are currently engaging in strength training than in 1998, but the percentage of those who train at least twice per week is significantly lower than the national objective of 30 percent by 2010. The findings from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) were reported in the July 21, 2006, issue of Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (available at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5528a1.htm>).

The NHIS data showed that the age-adjusted prevalence of strength training two or more times per week increased significantly from 1998 to 2004 (from 17.7 percent to 19.6 percent). However, no additional progress has been made since 2001, when the greatest yearly increase was reported. Although women experienced a significant increase between 1998 and 2004, overall strength training levels among women remained lower than those among men.

The prevalence of strength training was lowest among persons 65 years and older; nonetheless, respondents in this age group experienced the largest increase from 1998 to 2004. Possible explanations for this increase include promotion of active lifestyles among older adults and programs that specifically promote strength training, such as the Growing Stronger and Strong-for-Life programs. Despite these gains, additional measures to promote strength training are needed. Strength training throughout life can sustain functional independence for activities of daily living, such as the ability to carry groceries, rise from a chair, or walk up a flight of stairs.

Based on the findings of the NHIS report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that additional opportunities for adults to engage in strength training be made available, especially in places where adults already pursue leisure-time physical activity (e.g., schools, community centers). The findings also underscore the need to increase education about the benefits of strength training in targeted adult populations.

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