

NEW GO4LIFE CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON FITNESS FOR OLDER ADULTS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH NIH News
National Institute on Aging (NIA) <<http://www.nia.nih.gov/>>

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 1 p.m. EDT

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NEW GO4LIFE CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON FITNESS FOR OLDER ADULTS Public-private effort led by NIH reaches out to Boomers, their parents

Being physically active is vital to maintaining health and independence as we age, and a new federal campaign for people 50 and older will help them to get active and keep going. Introduced today by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Go4Life campaign encourages sedentary older adults to reap health benefits by making physical activity part of their daily lives. Only 25 percent of people aged 65-74 say they engage in regular physical activity.

Go4Life was presented Oct. 19, 2011, at a briefing on exercise and aging on Capitol Hill, hosted by Herb Kohl, D-Wis., Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Aging and by Mark Udall, D-Colo., Senate Special Committee on Aging.

The briefing highlighted the public-private partnership central to the campaign — a Go4Life team that will work to bring the campaign into communities across the United States. The team includes NIH, other agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and national organizations, corporations, insurers, health care providers, and nonprofit organizations.

Go4Life's participating organizations will incorporate campaign resources into their own health and wellness activities, disseminating Go4Life web links and materials to their members, employees, and customers. Many partners will directly sponsor events or community activities aimed at engaging older adults in exercise and physical activity as the campaign moves forward.

The campaign was conceived, and is being led, by the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the component of NIH devoted to research on aging. The NIA will work with the Go4Life community on events and will highlight participating organizations and their activities on the campaign website.

"If we want to become a healthy and fit nation, we need to increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life," said U.S. Surgeon General, Regina Benjamin, M.D., M.B.A. "Go4Life provides older adults with the tools and resources to get moving and keep moving. With the release of the National Prevention Strategy, we are moving our health care system from a focus on sickness and disease to a focus on wellness and prevention."

The campaign developed from concerns that, despite proven health benefits, exercise and physical activity rates among older people are low. About 30 percent of people aged 45-64 say they engage in regular leisure-time physical activity. Only a quarter of those ages 65-74 say they do. And while experts say people age 85 and older, can benefit from exercise, only 11 percent of that age group report being active. At the same time, NIA noted, some older adults were contacting the Institute for guidance on kinds of exercises to do, indicating interest in becoming more active.

"You're never too old to increase your level of physical activity and exercise," says Richard J. Hodes, M.D., director of the NIA. "Go4Life is based on studies demonstrating the benefits of exercise and physical activity for older people, including those with chronic health conditions. This new campaign reaches out to older people who traditionally have not embraced exercise and shows them ways that even those with physical limitations may be able to exercise safely as well."

The research-based resources of Go4Life center on a colorful, interactive website (www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life) providing information and motivation for exercise for individuals, families and friends, organizations, and health care professionals. The site features specific exercises, success stories, and free materials to motivate growing numbers of older people to start exercising and keep going. It even offers online virtual coaches to help motivate Go4Life participants. Many Go4Life materials are available in Spanish at <http://go4life.niapublications.org/resources/spanish#espanol>.

To develop Go4Life, NIA brought together some of the nation's leading experts on aging, exercise, and motivation. Over two years, the task force reviewed the research and worked with the institute to develop a book, "Exercise & Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging." The campaign is based on the book.

Some specific benefits of exercise for health and aging include:

Fitness and cardiorespiratory health: In one study, moderately fit women and men had a 50 percent lower risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, obesity, and some cancers when compared with their low fit peers. High fit people obtained additional benefit, typically another 10-15 percent lower risk.

Reduced pain, better function with osteoarthritis: In a clinical trial of people age 60 and older with knee osteoarthritis, those who participated in an aerobic exercise or resistance exercise program reported less pain and better function than those in the group assigned to a health education program.

Preventing diabetes: Results from the NIH-sponsored Diabetes Prevention Program, which examines ways to prevent or delay the development of non-insulin-dependent diabetes, found that people over age 60 at high risk for diabetes reduced their risk by 71 percent by adopting a moderate exercise routine and a low-fat diet.

"An important part of active aging is being healthy and staying fit," says Assistant Secretary for Aging Kathy Greenlee, who heads the Administration on Aging at HHS. "I look forward to working with NIH and the growing number of campaign partners in the aging network to distribute to seniors around the country these tips on how to get active and stay active."

The NIA invites public and private organizations whose interests and activities involve health, aging and exercise to join the campaign. Agencies, organizations and companies on board as of today as initial Go4Life team members are:

Federal agencies:

- Administration on Aging
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Institutes of Health
 - National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
 - National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
 - National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
 - National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases
 - National Institute of Mental Health
 - National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, HHS
- President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition

Private and nonprofit organizations:

- Alliance for Aging Research
- America On the Move Foundation, Inc.
- American College of Sports Medicine
- American Federation for Aging Research
- American Geriatrics Society
- American Library Association
- American Medical Association
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Psychological Association
- America's Health Insurance Plans
- CenturyLink
- Easter Seals
- Erickson Living/Greenspring
- Gerontological Society of America
- Humana Inc.
- International Council on Active Aging
- Jewish Community Centers Association of North America
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities
- National Council on Aging
- National Recreation and Park Association
- National Senior Health & Fitness Day (Mature Market Resource Center)
- OASIS
- Sunrise Senior Living
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteers of America
- Year of Vitality Cleveland
- YMCA of the USA

For further information on the public and private support of the Go4Life initiative, please visit www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life.

The NIA leads the federal government effort conducting and supporting research on aging and the health and well-being of older people. The Institute's broad scientific program seeks to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life. For more information on research, aging, and health, go to www.nia.nih.gov.

About the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

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