[IMAGE]

# Don't Be a Dropout

When was the last time you exercised vigorously? For optimal health, you should be performing a strenuous workout, such as running or lifting weights, several times each week. Based on a recent Gallup Poll, however, the odds are that most people aren't getting nearly enough exercise.

In November 2002, the Gallup Organization conducted a Health and Healthcare Poll of over 1,000 American adults to find out how many are vigorously exercising (i.e., at least 20 minutes of exercise that causes large increases in heart rate and breathing) or performing other forms of physical activity, and how often they're doing it. Gallup then compared the results to a similar phone survey it completed in November 2001.

The percentage of Americans who engage in vigorous exercise dropped from 52% in 2001 to 45% in 2002. Moderate exercise, or activities that cause a slight increase in heart rate (e.g., gardening or walking), has pretty much remained constant. Around 80% of people engage in weekly moderate exercise, although the percentage of those who do also dropped slightly in the past year. At every frequency of exercise, there was evidence of a decline in participation, according to the poll. Also, only a quarter of Americans are weight training, despite numerous efforts by health professionals to encourage people to lift weights every week.

Based on Gallup's "overall exercise index," 54% of Americans are considered sedentary or having low activity levels. So, at the same time Americans are eating more food with higher fat content, they're also working out less and burning fewer calories. Don't be a dropout - if you used to exercise, start working out again. If you've never really worked out, there's never been a better time to start. There may be no better way to stay healthy.

*Reference*:

Saad L. Fewer Americans feeling the burn: Dwindling number report vigorous exercise. Gallup News Service, Poll Analyses, Jan. 10, 2003.

Other studies on sports and fitness can be found at http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/sports.

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