Leisure Time and Non-leisure Time Physical Activity in Asian Americans

Namratha R. Kandula, MD, MPH
Fellow, General Internal Medicine
University of Chicago
Physical Activity is a National Health Priority

• Healthy People 2010: Physical activity is one of the ten leading health indicators

• CDC 2001: 30% of Americans meet physical activity recommendations

• African Americans and Hispanics are high risk for physical inactivity

• Data on physical activity in Asian Americans are lacking
Why is physical activity important?

• Regular physical activity brings substantial health benefits to people of all ages

• Reduces the risk of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, stroke, and other chronic diseases
Leading causes of death in Asian American women and men

1. Cancer
2. Heart disease
3. Stroke
4. Unintentional Injury
5. Diabetes

Physical activity benefits health at **ANY AGE** by:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Lowering blood sugar
- Lowering cholesterol
- Lowering blood pressure
- Lowering risk of certain types of cancer: breast, colon
- Increasing bone density
- Increasing energy levels
- Improving mood
- Improving balance and strength: especially important for older adults
What kind of physical activity has proven health benefits?

- 30 minutes of **moderate** physical activity 5 times per week (*activity that causes small increases in breathing or heart rate*)

- 20 minutes of **vigorous** physical activity 3 times per week (*activity that causes large increases in breathing or heart rate*)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Recommendations for Physical Activity
Physical activity does not need to be strenuous

**Moderate-Intensity:**
- Walking briskly
- Tennis, doubles
- Bicycling 5 to 9 mph, on flat ground
- Weight lifting
  - Long-Form Tai Chi Chuan
  - Hatha yoga
- Scrubbing floors
- Climbing stairs
- Raking lawn, pulling weeds, planting

**Vigorous-Intensity:**
- Jogging/running
- Walking briskly uphill
- Swimming laps
- Tennis, singles
- Bicycling more than 10 mph, or on uphill terrain
- Moving or pushing heavy furniture
- Shoveling heavy snow
Leisure time and non-leisure time physical activity in Asian Americans

1. What percent of Asian Americans meet national recommendations for physical activity?

2. Does physical activity vary by immigration status and Asian ethnicity?

3. Are Asian Americans more likely to participate in non-leisure time physical activities than leisure-time physical activity?
2001 California Health Interview Survey

- 37,000 White, non-Hispanics (56%)
- 9,458 Latinos (24%)
- 3,956 Asian Americans (11%)
- 2,764 African Americans (6%)
- 2,521 Other (4%)
Definitions

• **Leisure time physical activity**: an activity performed during free time or for recreation, that is not associated with work or transportation

• **Non-leisure time physical activity**: walking or bicycling for transportation to work, school, or for errands
What percent of Asian Americans meet recommended levels of leisure time physical activity?

- White: 36%
- Latino: 23%
- Asian: 25%
- Black: 29%
What percent of Asian Americans regularly walk or bicycle for transportation?

- White: 10%
- Latino: 19%
- Asian: 12%
- Black: 13%
Percent of Asian Americans meeting physical activity recommendations, by immigration status

- US-born: 37%
- In US >10 years: 23%
- In US 5-10 years: 18%
- In US < 5 years: 18%
Percent of Asian Americans who walk or bicycle for transport, by immigration status

- US-born: 10%
- In US >10 years: 11%
- In US 5-10 years: 12%
- In US < 5 years: 15%
Percent of Asian Americans meeting physical activity recommendations, by age group

- 18-29 yrs: 34%
- 30-39 yrs: 22%
- 40-49 yrs: 20%
- 50-64 yrs: 22%
- 64+ yrs: 20%
Percent of Asian Americans who walk or bicycle for transport, by age group

- 18-29 yrs: 10
- 30-39 yrs: 9
- 40-49 yrs: 9
- 50-64 yrs: 13
- 64+ yrs: 25
Percent of Asian Americans meeting physical activity recommendations, by Asian ethnicity

- Chinese: 20%
- Filipino: 30%
- South Asian: 26%
- Korean: 27%
- Vietnamese: 22%
- Japanese: 31%
Percent of Asian Americans who walk or bicycle for transport, by Asian ethnicity

- Chinese: 12%
- Filipino: 9%
- South Asian: 8%
- Korean: 5%
- Vietnamese: 11%
- Japanese: 6%
Conclusions

• 75% of Asian Americans in California do not meet national recommendations for regular leisure time physical activity

• Recent immigrants are much less likely to meet national recommendations for regular leisure time physical activity than U.S.-born Asians

• Although older Asian Americans and Chinese- and Vietnamese Americans are less likely to meet the national recommendations for leisure time physical activity, they may be more likely to walk or bicycle for transportation
Future research

• There is an urgent need for data on Asian Americans living outside of California

• Need to understand how Asian American men and women perceive physical activity: explore barriers and motivators

• Physical activity questionnaires in this population may need to incorporate questions about traditional Asian physical activity (e.g. tai-chi or yoga)

• Examine the influence of immigration, acculturation, and ethnicity on the types of physical activity that Asian Americans are willing to incorporate into their lives
Possible interventions

1. Population-level
   • Creating neighborhoods that are more conducive to physical activity: could target Asian enclaves

2. Community-level
   • Culturally and linguistically appropriate media campaigns to educate the Asian American community about the importance of physical activity
   • Community-based physical activity programs that take into account age, gender, acculturation, and cultural differences
   • Family-oriented programs that encourage children and adults to participate in physical activity

3. Individual-level
   • Encourage health care providers to counsel Asian Americans about how to incorporate physical activity into their lives