

Webinar on Regional Launch of Global Action Plan on Physical Activity

12 December 2018 – 9.30 am to 11.00 am (EST)

Opening remarks

- In June this year WHO launched the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity to support countries to achieve the global target of reducing physical inactivity by 10% by 2025 and by 15% by 2030. The plan responds to the requests by countries for updated guidance, and a framework of effective and feasible policy actions to increase physical activity at all levels.
- The action plan was developed through a worldwide consultation process involving governments and key stakeholders across multiple sectors including health, sports, transport, urban design, civil society, academia and the private sector.
- Insufficient physical activity is one of the leading risk factors for death worldwide and is on the rise in many countries. Regular and adequate physical activity, defined as any bodily movement that requires energy, can reduce the risk of many noncommunicable diseases and conditions, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, breast and colon cancers and depression.
- Other benefits associated with physical activity include improved bone and functional health. The energy expended while being physically active is also a fundamental part of energy balance and weight control. For societies, greater levels of physical activity throughout the population can minimize economic burdens due to medical costs and years of lost productivity.
- In addition to the multiple health benefits of physical activity, societies that are more active can generate additional returns on investment including a reduced use of fossil fuels, cleaner air and less congested, safer roads. These outcomes are interconnected with achieving the shared goals, political priorities and ambition of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.
- Physical activity also helps to create stronger, cohesive communities where people meet and interact more often, which is particularly important for mental health and reducing loneliness.

- Yet, much of the world is becoming less active. As countries develop economically, levels of inactivity increase. One in four adults do not meet the World Health Organization recommendations on physical activity. In some countries, these levels can be as high as 70%, due to changing transport patterns, increased use of technology, cultural values and urbanization. In particular, poorer people, people with disabilities and chronic diseases, marginalized populations, and indigenous people have fewer opportunities to be active.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean physical inactivity increased from 33% to 39% between 2011 and 2016.
- Meeting the recommended levels of physical activity can often be achieved while performing normal, daily routines, otherwise known as active living. Active living may include recreational activities and sports, or it may even be as simple as taking the stairs, moving around by bike, walking all the way to work or to the bus stop.
- Through the regional plans of action for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and for the prevention of obesity in children and adolescents, PAHO supports countries in strengthening national policies and plans; in implementing community-wide active living initiatives, for example, the regional Ciclovía initiative; in promoting the development of programs in schools and workplaces; through urban planning to facilitate walking, cycling, and use of public transport; and in implementing public campaigns and social marketing initiatives.
- Effective implementation will require bold leadership combined with cross-government and multisectoral partnerships at all levels to achieve a coordinated, whole-of-system response.
- To disseminate the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity and learn about the experiences already going on in the Region of the Americas, PAHO is organizing today this Regional launch.