

# **Statement on Exercise: Benefits and Recommendations for Physical Activity Programs for All Americans**

## **Parents**

Parents should try to understand the health benefits of regular physical activity and how exercise contributes to quality of life in order to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives and those of all family members. Moreover, parents should teach their children that proper physical activity is a fundamental part of normal healthy living. This commitment provides an incentive, sets an example, and creates in children a positive attitude toward physical activity. Parents and other family members must support each other's exercise habits by sharing responsibilities such as child care, food preparation, and shopping. Families at high risk for cardiovascular disease benefit from structured programs focused on specific health-behavior changes.

## **Schools**

Children must be introduced to the principles of regular physical exercise and recreational activities at an early age. Schools at all levels must develop and encourage positive attitudes toward physical exercise, providing opportunities to learn physical skills and perform physical activities, especially those that can be enjoyed for many years. The school curriculum should not overemphasize sports and activities that selectively eliminate children who are less skilled. Schools must teach the benefits of exercise and the development and maintenance of exercise and exercise conditioning throughout life.

*(Circulation. 1996; 94:857-862.)*

© 1996 American Heart Association, Inc.