

# Non-Communicable Diseases Watch

May 2017



衛生防護中心  
Centre for Health Protection



衛生署  
Department of Health

## *Move More and Sit Less*

### *Key Messages*

- ※ Insufficient physical activity is one of the 10 leading risk factors for death worldwide. Regardless of physical activity level, higher total or prolonged sitting time can increase the risk for a number of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.
- ※ In Hong Kong, about one-quarter of community-dwelling people aged 18-64 have inadequate aerobic physical activity cum high sitting time. For children and adolescents, less than one-tenth of them are active enough.
- ※ For optimal health, adults are encouraged to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or equivalent amounts throughout the week. Besides, they should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) and break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.
- ※ For school-age children, active living can enhance fitness and help improve academic achievement. Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years should accumulate daily at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. To nurture healthy active kids, parents and carers should act as good role model by being physically active.
- ※ For more information about the benefits of physical activity, physical activity guidelines or tips on how to incorporate physical activity into daily life, please visit the Department of Health's "Change for Health" website <http://www.change4health.gov.hk>.

## Move More and Sit Less

Insufficient physical activity is one of the 10 leading risk factors for death worldwide. When carried out on a regular basis and reaching adequate levels, however, physical activity reduces the risk of several chronic diseases and all-cause mortality. Despite the fact that physical activity brings health benefits, globally around 1 in 4 adults is not active enough; more than 80% of adolescents aged 11-17 are insufficiently physically active.<sup>1</sup>

Equally important, many people spend too much of their waking time sitting or doing other sedentary activities, either for work or recreation.<sup>2, 3</sup> Emerging evidence suggests that too much sitting, as distinct from too little physical activity, would compromise cardiovascular and metabolic health.<sup>4, 5</sup> Regardless of physical activity level, higher total or prolonged sitting time are associated with increased risks for cardiovascular disease incidence and mortality, cancer incidence and mortality, type 2 diabetes incidence, metabolic syndrome incidence, as well as all-cause mortality.<sup>6, 7</sup>

### Recommendations on Physical Activity and Sedentary Time

For optimal health, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends adults to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (such as brisk walking, yoga, swimming or cycling leisurely), or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (such as jogging, aerobic dance, fast swimming or cycling), or equivalent amounts throughout the week. For children and adolescents aged 5-17 years, they should accumulate daily at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast with physical activity, no agreed guidelines exist for sedentary time.<sup>2, 8</sup> However, one meta-analysis found that breaks in sedentary time (e.g. light walking for a minimum of 1 minute) might have positive effect on glycaemic control.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, some overseas health authorities issued

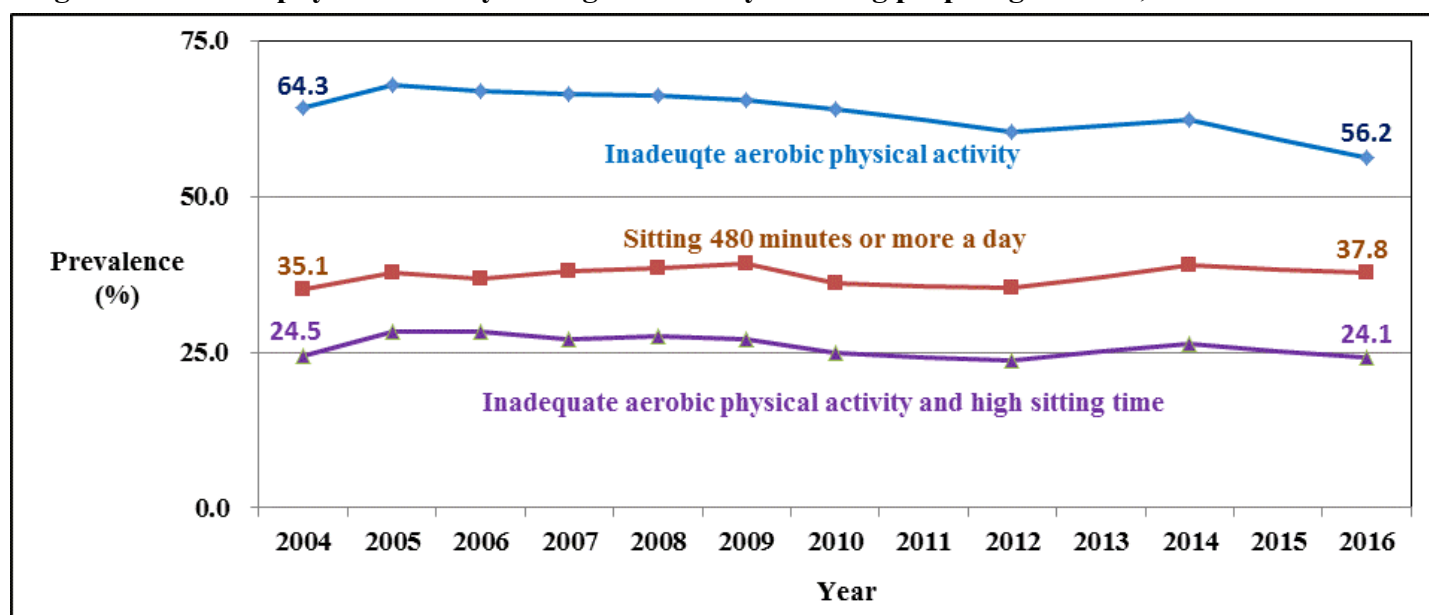
sedentary behaviour guidelines, asking children, adolescents and adults to “minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods” and/or “break up long periods of sitting as often as possible”.<sup>10-12</sup> Of note, smart phones and electronic screen products are gaining in popularity and the age of use is getting younger. As prolonged screen time displaces physical activities or outdoor activities among children and youth, the Canadian Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines also specify that children and youth should limit their screen time, and the less is the better.<sup>11</sup>

### How Physically Active Hong Kong People Are

In Hong Kong, data from the Behavioural Risk Factor Surveys showed that over half of community-dwelling people aged 18-64 failed to attain the WHO’s recommended level of aerobic physical activity for adults. In addition, more than one-third of them sat 480 minutes (8 hours) or more per day on average on a weekday (i.e. Monday to Friday). Overall, about one-quarter of community-dwelling people aged 18-64 had inadequate aerobic physical activity and high sitting time (i.e. sitting 480 minutes or more per day on average) (Figure 1).<sup>13</sup>

For children and adolescents, the Physical Fitness Test for the Community coordinated by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in 2011/12 observed that less than one-tenth of them (8.3% for children aged 7-12 and 8.4% for adolescents aged 13-19) had accumulated at least 60 minutes of moderate or above intensity physical activity every day in a week before enumeration. While about 40% of the children reported that they had spent more than 5 hours per day on sedentary activities (including study and recreation) after school, over one-quarter (25.7%) of adolescents spent an average of 3 hours or more each day watching electronic screens (including watching television, using cell phones or computers, or playing video games).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 1: Level of physical activity among community-dwelling people aged 18-64, 2004-2016**



Base: All respondents excluding 'unknown' and 'outliers' (such as those with sitting time <10 or >900 minutes per day on average on a weekday) in respective survey.

Source: Behavioural Risk Factor Surveys, Department of Health.

## Be Physically Active and Insert Breaks in Sedentary Time

Regular physical activity throughout the life course enables people to live better, healthier and longer. There are many ways to increase physical activity, whether it is at home, at school, at work or in the community. For most adults, just 30 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity a day would give benefits to their brain, heart, lungs, muscles and bones. While the benefits of physical activity are not restricted to competitive sports or exercise in a gym, three bouts of at least 10 minutes each mini-workout can be as effective as one bout of 30 minutes. Below are some general tips of how to make time and opportunity for more physical activities:

- Get up 30 minutes early in the morning and do some exercises, such as jogging, swimming and rope jumping.
- Use 10-15 minutes of lunch-time for a brisk walk.
- Go for a walk with family or friends after dinner.
- Get off the bus, train or tram one or a few stops early and walk the rest of the route.
- Choose the stairs over the lift or elevator.

As prolonged sitting harms health, here are some tips for limiting chair-time and incorporating stand-ups and small walks into daily routines:

- Stand on bus, train or tram instead of sitting.
- Stand or pace around while watching television or during each commercial break.
- Stand up while folding laundry, ironing or performing other sit-down tasks.
- Stand up and pace around while talking on the phone.
- Hand-deliver messages to colleagues rather than use the phone or emails, if possible in the work-place.
- Stand and walk around the room when waiting for meetings to start. Take a stand and stretch break during meetings.

Childhood is an important age period for establishing a habit of regular physical activity which may persist into adulthood. For school-age children, active living can enhance fitness and help improve academic achievement.<sup>15</sup> To nurture healthy active kids, here are some ways parents and carers can do:

- Act as good role model by being physically active.
- Provide children guidance on how to start and educate them on how much physical activity they need each day.
- Give children toys and gifts that promote physical activity, such as skipping ropes, bikes, balls and rackets.
- Show interest in the sports that they like, and play with them.
- Motivate children to be physically active with praises.
- Bring children to playgrounds, parks or beaches more often.
- Set limits on screen-time for recreation purpose, especially during daytime.

For people suffering from chronic diseases and those who have not exercised in the past or for a while, a “stepwise” approach is advisable. People in need can consult their family doctor and obtain a proper, safe and personalised exercise prescription. For more information about the benefits of physical activity, physical activity guidelines or tips on how to incorporate physical activity into daily life, please visit the Department of Health’s “Change for Health” website <http://www.change4health.gov.hk>. To enable members of the public to perform physical activity anytime and anywhere, DH has also produced a “10-minute Exercise” video. Public can view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoI6vWNY4uc>.

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## World Family Doctor Day 2017



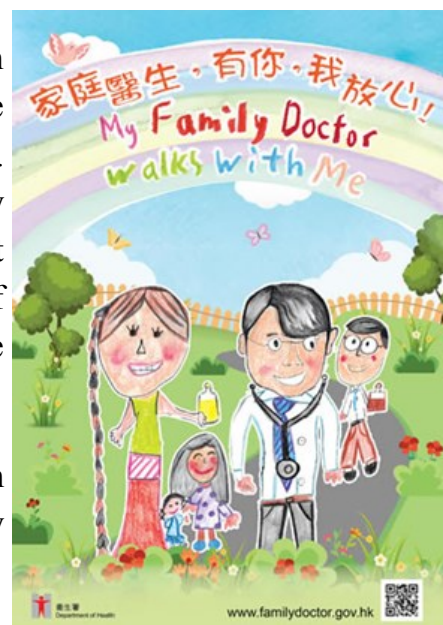
World Family Doctor Day (WFDD) is celebrated every year on 19 May to highlight the contribution of family doctors in health care systems around the world.

To echo WFDD 2017, the Primary Care Office (PCO) of the Department of Health (DH) launched the **“Thank You Doc!”** campaign in February 2017 to invite the public to show their gratitude towards their family doctors. Participants are encouraged to take creative photo(s) to express their thankfulness and send to PCO via email. By the deadline of

31 March 2017, over 100 photos were received. A heart-shaped collage is compiled here to thank all who have contributed. The photos will be used in publicity materials to promote WFDD 2017.

To instill the concept of family doctor to families with children, PCO of DH also designed a new poster with the English slogan **“My Family Doctor Walks with Me”**. The poster includes the drawing of a family and their family doctor by a 6 year-old girl. The smiling faces tell us that they enjoy a good relationship. This is indeed a showcase of WFDD - a real life patient and her family acknowledging the importance of their family doctor in maintaining their health.

Join us in recognising the role of family doctors as your health partner! Please visit [www.familydoctor.gov.hk](http://www.familydoctor.gov.hk) to find a family doctor that suits your need if you have not got one.



**Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) WATCH** is dedicated to promote public's awareness of and disseminate health information about non-communicable diseases and related issues, and the importance of their prevention and control. It is also an indication of our commitments in responsive risk communication and to address the growing non-communicable disease threats to the health of our community. The Editorial Board welcomes your views and comments. Please send all comments and/or questions to [so\\_dp3@dh.gov.hk](mailto:so_dp3@dh.gov.hk).

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