

Jakarta Statement on Active Living

Active Living/Physical Activity for Health constitutes one of the major components of a healthy lifestyle and general health promotion and protection. There is today strong evidence to indicate that regular Physical Activity provides people of all ages, male and female, with substantial physical, social and mental health gains and general well-being.

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of premature mortality in general and to a large extent protects against the development of the major noncommunicable, chronic diseases. It may also reduce the prevalence of obesity and provide a beneficial adjunct for alcoholism, substance abuse and other forms of addictive behaviour.

The changing burden of disease, the great proportion of young population and the increasing longevity throughout the world make it necessary to identify lifelong health-enhancing strategies that are safe, effective and low cost such as increasing physical activity. Physical Activity for Health was thus investigated at the 4th International Conference on Health Promotion (held in Jakarta, Indonesia, 21-25 July 1997) as one of the ten priority health promotion areas of the conference and as one of the most important future challenges.

A symposium was organized on this emerging health promotion topic. The following issues were emphasized:

- Scientific evidence shows that daily moderate activity enhances health in its broadest sense;
- Sedentary modern lifestyles make it increasingly difficult and provide less and less incentive for people to remain physically active;
- Experiences so far suggest three pathways to successful development and implementation of active living programmes:
 - sound scientific basis leading to policy support and action programs
 - development and evaluation of community interventions with an intersectoral involvement
 - effective advocacy as well as dissemination and communication of information.
- Review of a number of large-scale physical activity promotion programmes further pointed out several important and encouraging issues :
 - there are needs and possibilities for immediate action;
 - acting locally, even in national programmes, is essential in order to tailor the programmes to correspond to real needs, expectations, and opportunities;
 - projects directed to children and women should be a priority;
 - realization of the actions should be simple, even if the foundation is sophisticated;
 - documentation of the activities is important for evaluation and transfer of the experiences.
- WHO continuous support to physical activity and the launching of its Global Active Living Initiative were welcomed as an important, timely and potentially effective measure.

An important outcome of the Conference regarding physical activity was that sedentary behaviour was included in the Conference Declaration as one of the demographic trends that threaten the health and well-being of hundreds of million people worldwide.

In conclusion, WHO Initiative on "Active Living: Physical Activity for Health" was included for the first time as a separate issue in the programme of the International Health Promotion Conferences. It gained strong interest among the participants, it is well represented in the Conference report, and it is pointed out as one of the determinants of health in the Conference Declaration.