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## 300,000 Die Annually Due to Sedentary Lifestyle

### New Government Report Highlights Benefits of Physical Activity

June 20, 2002 - A report released today cites that 300,000 people die each year from diseases and health conditions related to a sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits, nearly as many as who die from smoking. And, it says, there is an annual cost of \$117 billion annually associated with overweight and obesity.

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson today released the new report that underscores the importance of physical activity in preventing disease and outlines the physical and financial costs associated with a sedentary lifestyle.

The HHS report pulls together data from various studies and scientific sources to illustrate the correlation between inactivity and poor health, particularly the onset of diseases such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

President George W. Bush called today on all Americans to become more active as he unveiled his administration's Healthier U.S. initiative. The President stressed that "every little bit counts" and encouraged Americans to do what they can to be more active in their daily lives.

"We want Americans to understand the real costs to their lives and their finances from inactivity and poor eating habits, but more importantly we want them to understand they can do something about it," Secretary Thompson said. "Simply walking 30 minutes a day can have a measurable impact on a person's health and in preventing diseases such as diabetes. Playing with your children for an hour each day in the backyard improves the entire family's health. You don't need to join a gym or be a great athlete to get active and make a difference in your health."

"The President's leadership will help motivate all Americans to lead healthier lives," he added.

Millions of Americans suffer from chronic illnesses that can be prevented or improved through regular physical activity: 12.6 million people have coronary heart disease; 1.1 million people suffer from a heart attack each year; and nearly 17 million people have diabetes, of which 90 percent to 95 percent of the cases are type 2 diabetes, which is associated with obesity and physical inactivity. In addition, nearly 50 million adults between the ages of 20 and 74 are obese, and more than 108 million adults (61 percent) are either obese or overweight.

What is particularly alarming is increases in the percentage of young people who are overweight. For example, the percent of adolescents aged 12-19 who are overweight has almost tripled in the past 20 years. By maintaining a healthy weight, more young people would be able to avoid negative behaviors that can lead to depression and stress. In fact, studies show that participation in physical activity and sports can increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety and stress and promote social well-being among youths.

Regular physical activity can prevent a broad range of health problems for people of all ages. This can be as simple as 30 minutes of moderate activity such as brisk walking at least five days a week or 20 minutes of vigorous

physical activity at least three times a week. Studies have found that regular physical activity reduces the risk of dying prematurely and developing diabetes, high blood pressure and several forms of cancer, including colon cancer. Even shorter bursts of activity can make a difference. Physical activity can also reduce feelings of depression and anxiety and help people of all ages maintain a healthy weight and healthy bones, muscles and joints.

"We need to stop making good health a fad in America and make it a way of life. We need to make it fun and achievable," Secretary Thompson said. "At HHS, we're working to prevent disease by showing people how to get active in an enjoyable and attainable manner."

"Physical Activity Fundamental to Preventing Disease" was produced by HHS' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and is available online at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/physicalactivity/>.

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