

## 11. Physical Activity

*Physical activity* is any activity that gets your body moving, makes your breathing become quicker and your heart beat faster. You can be physically active in many different ways, at any time of day.

### **Benefits of Physical activity**

The many benefits of regular physical activity can include:

- Reduce the risk of, or help manage, type 2 diabetes.
- Reduce the risk of, or help manage, cardiovascular disease (CVD).
- Maintain and/or improve blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
- Reduce the risk of, and assist with rehabilitation from, some cancers.
- Prevent unhealthy weight gain and assist with weight loss.
- Build strong muscles and bones.
- Create opportunities for socialising and meeting new people.
- Help to prevent and manage mental health problems.
- Help to develop and maintain overall physical and mental well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Being physically active and limiting your sedentary behaviour every day is essential for your health and wellbeing. It can help prevent heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers, and also improve psychological wellbeing.

### **Physical Activity Guidelines**

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines outline the minimum levels of physical activity required for health benefits. The Guidelines also include ways to incorporate physical activity and minimise sedentary behaviour in everyday life.<sup>2</sup>

Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines recommend that adults aged 18 – 64 do between two and a half and five hours of moderate intensity physical activity each week, or between one and a quarter and two and a half hours of vigorous intensity physical activity each week, as well as minimizing prolonged sitting as much as possible. The guidelines also provide recommendations of physical activity for other age groups.<sup>3</sup>

The World Health Organisation confirms that regular physical activity of moderate intensity – such as walking, cycling, or doing sports – has significant benefits for health. At all ages, the benefits of being physically active outweigh potential harm, for example through accidents. Some physical activity is better than doing none. By becoming more active throughout the day in relatively simple ways, people can quite easily achieve the recommended activity levels.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, in 2004, the World Health Assembly adopted the *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*. This Strategy describes the actions needed to increase physical activity worldwide. The Strategy urges stakeholders to take action at global, regional and local levels to increase physical activity.<sup>5</sup>

### **Obesity & Overweight**

Overweight and obesity is measured at the population level for adults using the Body Mass Index (BMI) which is calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by height in metres squared.<sup>6</sup> Overweight is measured at a BMI of 25 or more with obesity determined at a BMI of 30 or more. These cut-off points are based on associations between and chronic disease and mortality and have been adopted for use internationally by the World Health Organisation.<sup>7</sup>

Being overweight or obese can have serious negative health consequences, and the effects of overweight and obesity are a leading health concern in Australia. Carrying extra weight can lead to cardiovascular disease (mainly heart disease and stroke), type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders like osteoarthritis, and some cancers. These conditions cause premature death and substantial disability.

Overweight and obesity rates in Australia are some of the highest in the world. In 2014/15, 11.2 million Australian adults were overweight or obese, equivalent to a national rate of 63.4%. National rates of overweight and obesity have increased in recent decades, up from 56.3% in 1995.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, a higher percentage of men (70.8%) were overweight or obese than women (56.3%). The percentage of adults who were overweight or obese generally increased with age.<sup>9</sup>

Alarming, this means that two (2) in three (3) Australian adults are overweight or obese, and 1 in 4 Australian children are overweight or obese.<sup>10</sup>

#### Obesity & Overweight in Monash

The LGA measure of people within the City of Monash who are obese is 14% comparable with the Vic measure of 17.3%.<sup>11</sup> The percentage of people within the City of Monash who are overweight is 26.6% comparable to the Vic measure of 32.5%.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Physical Inactivity**

Physical *in*activity is now identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality.<sup>13</sup> Physical inactivity levels are increasing in many countries with major implications for the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and the general health of the population worldwide.<sup>14</sup>

The significance of physical activity on public health is clear and the WHO and governments worldwide promote and encourage physical activity as critical factor in the prevention of NCDs.<sup>15</sup>

The evidence is conclusive - regular physical activity has many health benefits and plays an important role in promoting healthy weight and preventing disease.

#### Physical Activity in Monash

Table 1: Snapshot of Physical Activity in Monash provides some insight into the nature and level of physical activity in Monash compared with both metropolitan Melbourne and more broadly across Victoria. Some points to note include:

- Monash is on par with metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria with 17.4% of the population participating in no physical activity in the week prior to the survey. While Monash is performing marginally better than the rest of the state, 17.4% is too high a percentage of non-activity;
- Monash is lagging well behind on the measure of 4 or more days of physical activity per week; and
- Monash residents prefer non-organised physical activity over organised physical activity - this is consistent with both the metropolitan and Victorian average.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 1: Snapshot of Physical Activity in Monash<sup>17</sup>**

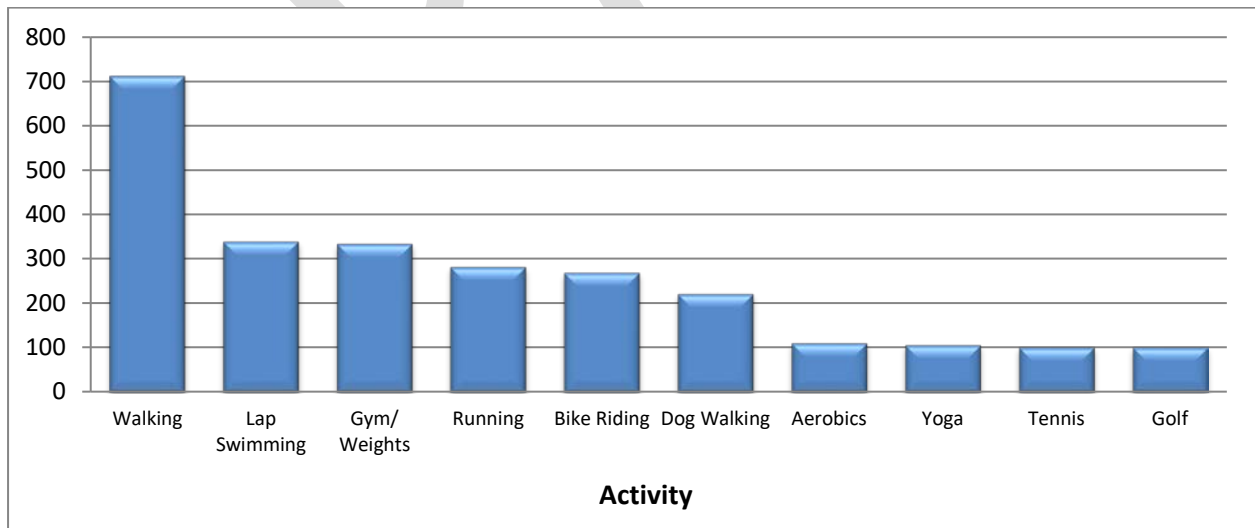
Measure	Monash	Metro Average	Vic Average
Physical Activity 0 days per week	17.4%	18.1%	18.9%
Physical Activity 4 or more days per week	37.5%	41.4%	41.3%
Participation in an organised (e.g. club) physical activity, weekly	7.7%	8.7%	9.8%
Participation in non-organised activity, weekly: usual activity – jogging/running	17.6%	15.1%	14.0%
Participation in non-organised activity, weekly: usual activity - gym or fitness	8.2%	12.4%	11.8%

Compared to all Victorians, a similar proportion of Monash residents engaged in no physical activity during the week (17.4%, Victoria = 18.9%). A similar proportion of Monash residents engaged in physical activity four or more days per week compared with the Victorian estimate (37.5%, Victoria = 41.3%). The three most popular non-organised physical activities in Monash were walking (45.6%), jogging or running (17.6%), and cycling (8.2%).<sup>18</sup>

**Popular Physical Activities**

Table 2: Most Popular Recreation Activities in Monash reveals that the four most popular physical activities in Monash are walking, lap swimming, attending the gym/weights and running. Tennis and golf were the only structured sports to make the top ten most popular physical activities.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 2: Most Popular Recreation Activities in Monash<sup>20</sup>**



**Table 3: Victorian Participation in organised and non-organised sport by gender, 2010 (per ,000) <sup>21</sup>**

Vic	Organised only (,000)	Non-organised only (,000)	Both Organised and Non-organised (,000)	Total Participation (,000)
Male	294.9	879.6	659.2	1833.7
Female	202.6	977.3	634.4	1814.3
Net Difference	Male +91.4	Female +97.7	Male +24.8	Male +19.4

**Table 4: Victorian organised participants — total participation in organised activities by type of organisation by gender, 2010 (per ,000) <sup>22</sup>**

Vic	Fitness, leisure or indoor sports centre	Club sport or recreation club	Work	School	Other	Total
Male	347.2	702.9	49.1	80.3	142.1	954.1
Female	422.0	414.8	29.6	82.6	222.1	837.0
Net Difference	Female +74.8	Male +288.1	Male +19.5	Female +2.3	Female +80	Male +117.1

In 2010, males participated more than females in organised (club based) sport than women. More women participated than men in non-organised (casual) sport.

In 2010, the top four specific activities for men in Victoria were;

1. Walking (bush & other) – 31.8%
2. Fitness/Aerobics – 19.4%
3. Cycling – 16.9%
4. Running – 14.9%

In 2010, the top four specific activities for women in Victoria were;

1. Walking (bush & other) – 50.3%
2. Fitness/Aerobics – 29.8%
3. Swimming – 14.4%
4. Running – 10.5% <sup>23</sup>

#### **Physical Activity - Things to remember**

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
- See everyday activities as a good opportunity to be active.
- Try to find the time for some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness benefits.
- Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting and break up long periods of sitting as often as possible. <sup>24</sup>

## 11. Physical Activity – Reference List

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- <sup>4</sup> World Health Organisation 2010, Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health, World Health Organisation, retrieved 16 December 2016 [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44399/1/9789241599979\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44399/1/9789241599979_eng.pdf)
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- <sup>6</sup> Department of Health, retrieved 31 October 2016, <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-pubhlth-strateg-hlthwt-obesity.htm>
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<sup>20</sup> City of Monash Physical Activity Plan 2010-2015 (Survey results)

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