

# Heart Disease and Stroke Facts: Heart Attack, Stroke and Physical Inactivity in Alaska

## Why is Physical Activity Important?

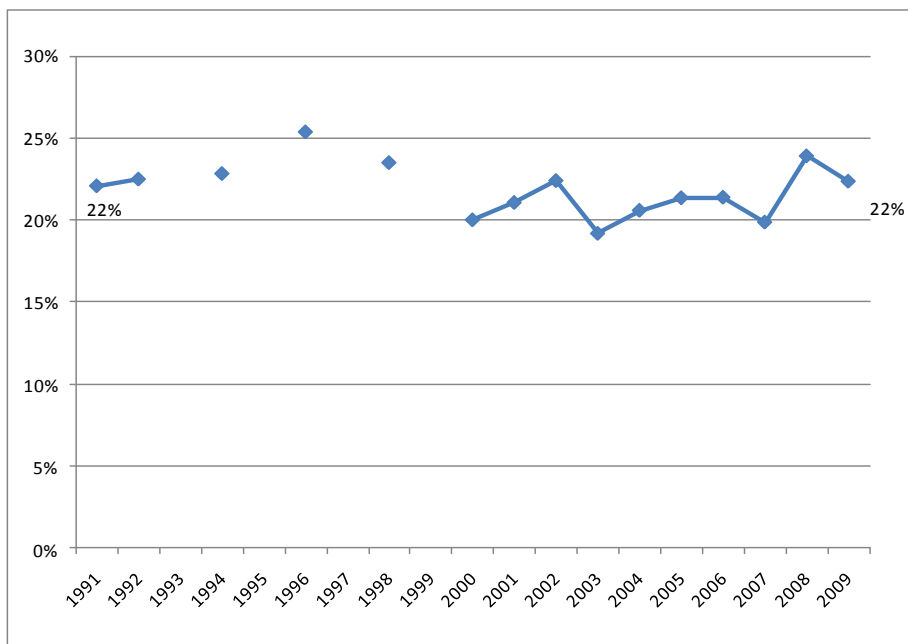
Rhythmic and steady use of the body's large muscle groups, such as the arms, legs, and back, increase the heart rate. The heart is exercised and arteries become more elastic. The progression of arterial plaque formation is reduced. Exercise also improves blood pressure, body weight, and cholesterol levels.

## Heart Disease and Physical Inactivity

- Physical inactivity accounts for 12.2% of global burden of heart attack.<sup>1</sup>
- Compared to the vigorously active, those with a sedentary lifestyle have nearly twice the risk of developing heart disease.<sup>2</sup>
- Inactive middle-aged men have 3 times the risk of stroke relative to those who engage in vigorous physical activity.<sup>3</sup>
- Women who briskly walk a half hour a day reduce their risk of heart disease by 35%.<sup>4</sup>

## Physical Activity and Alaskans

For purposes of national health surveys, inactivity is defined as no exercise or physical activity outside of work in the prior 30 days. Alaska's inactivity rates range between 21% and 25% of those surveyed<sup>5</sup>. Alaska is slightly more active than the rest of the country where 25% of adults report no physical activity.



## Opportunities for Physical Activity in Alaska

The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans<sup>5</sup> recommend adults get 150 minutes per week of moderately intense activity, or 75 minutes per week of vigorous activity, or a combination, to receive substantial health benefits.

Given the wealth of opportunities for physical activity in Alaska, decreasing the number of inactive Alaskans should be easy. Make it a family affair:

- Hiking
- Berry Picking
- Beach Combing
- Exploring Nature
- Fishing
- Hockey
- Biking
- X-Country Skiing
- Walking



## Heart Disease and Stroke in Alaska

- Heart diseases was the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death in Alaska in 2006<sup>6</sup>
- Heart disease accounted for over one third of the total hospitalization costs for Alaska in 2007 at \$515 million<sup>7</sup>
- Stroke was the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in Alaska in 2006<sup>6</sup>
- Stroke is also a leading cause of function impairments, with 15-30% being permanently disabled<sup>8</sup>

Given the prevalence and cost of heart disease and stroke in Alaska, anything we do to reduce our individual risk of cardiovascular disease eventually benefits all Alaskans. So get out there and move!

<sup>1</sup>Yusuf S, Hawken S, Ounpuu S, et al, and the INTERHEART Study Investigators. Effects of potentially modifiable risk factors associated with myocardial infarction in 52 countries (the INTERHEART study): case-control study. *Lancet* 2004; 364(9438): 937-52; <sup>2</sup>Berlin JA, Colditz GA. A meta-analysis of physical inactivity in the prevention of coronary heart disease. *Am J Epidemiology* 1990;132:612-628; <sup>3</sup> Wannamethee G, Sharper AG. Physical activity in stroke in middle aged men. *BMJ* 1992; 204:597-601; <sup>4</sup>Manson JE, Hu FB, Rich-Edwards JW, et al. Statement on Exercise: benefits and recommendations for physical activity programs for all Americans. *Circulation*. 1996;94:857-862; <sup>5</sup><http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/>; <sup>6</sup>Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics; <sup>7</sup>The Burden of Heart Disease and Stroke in Alaska: Mortality, Morbidity, and Risk Factors, available at: [http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/pubs/burden\\_Dec09.pdf](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/chp/pubs/burden_Dec09.pdf); <sup>8</sup>American Heart Association. *Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics-2004 Update*.