



Media Statement
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Lack of exercise causes 12.7 percent of all deaths in New Zealand

A lack of physical exercise is one of the most significant causes of death in New Zealand, and a national action plan is needed to increase Kiwis' everyday levels of activity.

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine says physical activity should be designed back into Kiwis' everyday lives through changes to transport policy, urban and building design, and through measures as simple as employers installing standing desks and having walking meetings.

"Nearly half (48%) of New Zealand adults do not meet recommended daily physical activity levels and this creates huge societal costs and leads to avoidable, premature death," says College president, Dr Caroline McElnay.

A lack of adequate physical activity causes 7.9 percent of heart disease in New Zealand, 9.8 percent of Type 2 diabetes, 13.1 percent of breast cancer and 14.1 percent of colon cancer.

Overall, it is thought that a lack of physical activity causes 12.7 percent of all deaths in New Zealand.

The College is calling for more resourcing for cycle ways and pedestrian areas, including greater provision of green space, in urban areas.

It wants all commercial buildings to have shower facilities and says the use of stairs should be promoted over the use of lifts. Secure storage should be provided for workers who commute by bike.

Employers are being encouraged to develop an organisational physical activity policy, install stand-up desks, have walking meetings and provide subsidised gym memberships.

"Over recent decades we have successfully engineered physical activity out of everyday life," Dr McElnay said.

"Work is now largely sedentary, transport is largely sedentary, free time is scarce and hence active time is low.

"In order to live longer, we must address the way we live and structure everyday physical activity back into our lives."

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For more information contact Dr McElnay (022) 054 2315

For a copy of the College's Physical Activity and Health Policy visit <http://www.nzcpmh.org.nz/policy-publications>