

# Encouraging Physical Activity As Part of Everyday Life: Starting the Conversation

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## Challenges

- No specific *evaluated/structured* questions to use for assessment
- *Insufficient time* to conduct detailed assessments with patients (15 minute office visit)
- Questions may lead to discussions that clinicians are not prepared for -i.e. violence in neighborhood is barrier to outdoor exercise
- Lack of knowledge *at the point of care* of current community resources for safe, structured activity

- Talk with patients about physical activity as a part of everyday life.
- Understand the factors of the built environment that affect patient's ability to engage in physical activity as a part of everyday life.
- Tailor advice based on an assessment of the patient's work/school, live, play environments.

## Role Play # 1

# Probe Activity

## Opportunities/Challenges

- Ask about specific situations:
  - Examples “How active are you at work?”
  - “What do you do when you have free time?”
  - “How many minutes you think your daily activity amounts to?”
- For kids:
  - “How do you stay active during school?”
  - “After school?”
  - “Are you in any sports?”
  - “What is the after school activity?”
- For families:
  - “How active are you as a family?”
  - “How much screen time does your child get?” (A reminder that they are not getting activity when they are in front of a screen)

- “Tell me about your neighborhood and the opportunities for physical activity. [Sub-probes: perceptions of safety, supervision for children, community activities/resources]
- Ask what they like to do and what works for them: “What are your ideas how to be more active (given work, school, other daily life responsibilities)? What do you like to do and what would work for you?”
- For families with children: Is there sufficient care giving/supervision to allow parents to exercise?

- Multiple messages for different family members
- Messaging should not be punitive towards overweight child (instead, emphasize the benefits, i.e. physical activity is important for doing well in school and mental health. It's about activity and *health*, not activity and *weight*).
- Messaging should emphasize incremental steps (we're not trying to change your entire life)
- Emphasize active travel/active play:
  - Walking/Biking to/from school, walking with friends
  - Find out what other after school activities are available
  - Ask about family time (bike rides etc.)

Consider safety issues if that is a concern that comes up:

- “What safe space is there available?” (Backyards or with neighbors)
- Suggest that when parents get home, can take dog for walk, do errands together or play games that require being active

Inspire/negotiate commitment to do one thing different/  
more:

- “What is one thing you could do every weekend that is active? What area you already doing? Can you do more of it?”
- Ask who is a good model for them and how does that person stay active?

## Some generalizations from the research..

- Reaching African Americans through faith-based institutions and messages that emphasize empowerment
- Emphasizing “being strong at an early age” for Native Americans
- Emphasizing intergenerational activities and linking group physical activity to traditional celebrations and music for Latinos
- Emphasizing participation in traditional group physical activities such as dance and martial arts for Asian Americans
- Remember that individuals in a culture may not reflect their ethnicity-avoid generalizations

## Subgroup distinctions

- Parents may be concerned that their neighborhood is not safe for their children to play outdoors or walk to school by themselves. In this case, income and ability to live in a perceived “safe” neighborhood, the neighborhood characteristics (well-lighted streets, traffic calming, “eyes on the street”), and presence of other caregivers (babysitters, grandparents, neighbors) are important factors to understand.
- Members of low-income households in urban settings may walk more as a means of transit to/from work. In this case, geographic setting (urban vs. rural) and economic means (ability/desire to pay for auto/public transit) are key factors to understand.

## Role Play # 2

- Talk with your patients about options for incorporating physical activity into their daily life
- Have the conversations often and do it consistently
- Motivate change! Research shows that patients are more likely to engage in activities when encouraged by their provider
- Recognize that behavior/behavior change occurs in context- work with your patients to establish the context and problem solve with their situation in mind
- Thanks for listening!