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Little or No Activity Can Lead to . . .

(CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding): "It is important for adults to get a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week to help prevent chronic diseases and promote health." Some other current reports even recommended that children should now have an hour of physical activity every day.

Daily exercise or activity such as walking can prevent and even reverse heart disease and diabetes, and can prevent cancer and strokes.

Health and Human Services Secretary, Tommy Thompson, has launched a \$15 million program to try to encourage communities to do more to prevent chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes. It outlines ways people can prevent them, including better diet and increased exercise. (4/15/03)

Thompson states that heart disease and strokes will cost the country more than \$351 billion in 2003.

(US Surgeon General's report from December 2001): More than 61 percent of adults are overweight in the US, 27 percent of them are obese (US Surgeon General's report from last December (2001). (Overweight is defined as roughly 10-30 pounds over a healthy weight, obesity is 30 or more pounds over. People who weigh too much are at an increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, many types of cancers and other illnesses.)

Obesity doubles the risk of heart failure in women and increases the risk of heart attack and Type II diabetes (an illness that has increased by nearly 50 percent in the past decade).

Studies show that weight-related illnesses threaten to overwhelm the healthcare system over the next decade and increase costs.

(Anne Wolf, University of Virginia Medical School - she has studied the economics of obesity.): Americans' extra weight costs the nation as much as \$93 billion in annual medical bills. This is the highest estimate yet of the great medical costs of obesity. It even surpasses the annual bill for smoking, which was estimated at about \$76 billion a few years ago.

(On-line issue of "Health Affairs"): "Overall, annual medical costs for an obese person are about 37.7% more (or \$732 higher), than the costs for someone of normal weight.

Children's Health . . .

[November, 9, 2002 - Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA)]: In the last 30 years, the percentage of 6-11 year-olds who are overweight has more than doubled; and the percentage of adolescents who are overweight has tripled. (Approximately 15% of 12- to 19-year-olds are overweight now, up from 5% in the late 1970s. 15% of 6- to 11-year-olds are overweight now, up from 7% in the late 1970s. 10% of 2- to 5-year-olds are overweight now, up from 5% in the late 1970s.)

(CDC): 15% of US children and adolescents (approx. 9 million individuals) are overweight or obese, and approx. 1/4 of US African-American and Hispanic children are obese.

Pediatricians are diagnosing and treating conditions today that before were rarely seen in these young ages. For example, there is a rise in Type-II Diabetes ("Adult Diabetes") in children – a disease typically seen in older adults (Type-I Diabetes is more commonly seen in children). This is even more prevalent in African-American and Hispanic individuals.