

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE CITY OF MANILA

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Introduction: Results of the Food and Nutrition Research Institute's (FNRI) 2003 6th National Nutrition Surveys indicated an increasing overweight prevalence among students, 6-19 years old, that may lead to obesity and other lifestyle-diseases (e.g. diabetes mellitus, hypertension, coronary heart disease) in later life. Empirical data on the prevention of overweight/obesity among these students are inadequate or not available, particularly on physical activity (PA), to provide basis for formulating effective local school intervention programs. In 2002, the Philippine Association for the Study of Overweight and Obesity (PASOO), in collaboration with the FNRI, initiated in selected schools in the city of Manila, a physical activity assessment study for the younger age group, 6-12 years. This present study is an extension of that prior study, but covering the high school students. **Objective:** To assess the physical activity of students in selected high schools in the city of Manila. **Methods:** The study included 1,217 students, 11-18 years old, from a section each for every year level from first to fourth year, who were selected from 4 public and 4 private high schools by stratified cluster sampling. A modified PA checklist/questionnaire form adapted from Kowalski et. al. (1997) was used. Assisted by researchers, the students were asked to accomplish this form in the school, characterizing these PAs on three typical days: during the most recent physical education (P.E.) day, a non-P.E. day, and a weekend day. The PA data were classified into categories: "light", "moderate" and "active", based on the compendium of PA by Ainsworth (2000), by type of day. A modified scoring system (Pate, 1994) based on PA frequency per day per student was used to categorize students into PA criteria: "Inactive", "Moderately Active", and "Active". **Results:** There were more female than male students (815 vs. 402) in the study. As they move up to the highest academic level, an increasing "inactivity" among the students was revealed. Overall, majority of the students were "inactive" in both public and private schools. The highest PA frequency was recorded for *watching television* and other light activities (i.e. *playing video* or *just sitting down* or *talking with friends at school after lunch*). Only 30% did not perform "active" PA during weekends. Common "moderate" activities done by 14% of the students were *walking for exercise*, *playing basketball* and *volleyball*, which were mostly done in school. **Conclusion.** A high percentage of the at-risk students, aged 11-18 years old, were found to be physically "inactive" (86%). **Recommendation.** It is recommended that policies and programs be formulated that will help students to become more physically active than they presently are.