

Carroll County Times

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Editorial for Friday, October 10, 2008

Guidelines a roadmap to health

The government wants you to adopt a healthier lifestyle, and it has released new guidelines for physical activity that it says are the most comprehensive of their kind.

Some schools in Carroll this week are taking part in a challenge designed to encourage healthy habits, including eating right and exercise. But the guidelines released this week by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services include recommendations for all stages of life, as well as for people with disabilities or those with chronic medical conditions.

In releasing the new guidelines, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said, "The evidence is clear - regular physical activity over months and years produces long-term health benefits and reduces the risk of many diseases. The more physically active you are, the more health benefits you gain."

Those health benefits can translate into fewer health problems later in life. And with the cost of health care rising every year, being able to delay or eliminate health-related issues could have a direct impact on how much each of us has to spend on health-related issues.

Plus, as we grow older, the chances of maintaining an active lifestyle for longer increase if we take care of our health.

Among the agency's recommendations, children and adolescents should engage in one hour or more of moderate or vigorous aerobic physical activity a day; adults should engage in 2.5 hours a week of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity; older adults should follow the guidelines for younger adults if they are able, or should work with their doctors to exercise within their abilities and limitations.

The recommendations break down different activities that are considered light, moderate or heavy, and provide guidelines for how long and how often the exercising should occur.

Everyone wants to maintain their health and active lifestyle for as long as possible. But doing that requires work and commitment. The new HHS guidelines can provide a roadmap for people of all ages and abilities on how to reach their long-term fitness goals.

For more information about the "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans," visit www.hhs.gov or www.health.gov/paguidelines.