Texas Obesity Research Center

Physical Activity among Asian American Adults: Data from the 2010 Health of Houston Survey

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The Asian American population represents the fastest growing minority groups in the US; yet, little is still known about physical activity (PA) among Asian Americans. This study examines PA among Asian American adults living in the Houston, TX area. Methods: Data on adults aged 18 and over were drawn from the Health of Houston Survey 2010—a population-based survey focused in the city of Houston and Harris County. PA was operationalized in two ways: number of moderate leisure-time PA days in the past week; and meeting CDC recommendations for aerobic exercise. Multivariate regression models (negative binomial and logistic) were used to compare the PA of Asian Americans with other racial/ethnic groups in the area (white, African American, and Hispanic) and to determine key predictors of PA among Asian Americans and specific Asian ethnic groups (Chinese, Vietnamese, and South Asians). Results: Asians emerged as the only racial/ethnic group that was significantly less likely than whites to have sufficient PA levels (OR=0.66). Both Asians and Hispanics had similarly lower expected numbers of PA days compared to whites (Incidence Rate Ratios or IRR=0.91 and 0.89, respectively), although the effect of being Asian was not significant. Within the Asian sample, Vietnamese had a significantly higher expected number of PA days, compared to their Chinese counterparts (IRR=1.36). Compared to the 18-24 age group, older Asians aged 65 and older had significantly higher expected number of PA days (almost one additional expected day; IRR=1.90) and were 61% more likely to have sufficient PA levels. Low educational achievement and immigrant status were key predictors of decreased PA. Conclusions: Results suggest that Asians are among the least physically active of the major racial/ethnic groups. In contrast to other racial/ethnic groups in the US, older Asians tend to be more active than younger Asians and Asian immigrants are less active than US-born Asians. These findings highlight the need for more targeted and culturally competent interventions to promote physical activity in Asian American communities.
KEY WORDS: Physical Activity, Asian Americans, Health of Houston Survey