



The Australian Prevention
Partnership Centre
Systems and solutions for better health

NEW
REPORT

Getting Australia Active III

Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is the first comprehensive guide on a whole-of-systems approach to physical activity in the world. It supports decision makers to implement physical activity policies and programs in Australia.



GAA III was developed by the Australian Systems Approaches to Physical Activity (ASAPa) project, a national initiative led by researchers at The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre and the University of Sydney, and funded by the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund.

It updates evidence published in previous editions (2002 and 2004) and incorporates guidance to support policy makers in Australia to implement actions related to the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity.

It provides design specifications on effective policies and programs across eight policy domains, guidance on priority investments, case studies and links to online resources.

REPORT OUTLINE

The case for physical activity

- Discusses the substantial health and other co-benefits associated with addressing physical activity, including positive implications for economic growth, community building, liveability, environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing, and safety.
- Details the prevalence of Australians meeting physical activity recommendations over time, and identifies important considerations for monitoring trends.

Overview and rationale for whole-of-systems approaches in Australia

- Explains how to apply whole-of-systems approaches to physical activity in Australia. It presents a conceptual systems map for physical activity developed as part of the Australian Systems Approaches to Physical Activity (ASAPa) project.

Policy domains for action

- Details eight domains where policy can intervene to promote physical activity, makes recommendations for investment and action, identifies other strategies or domains that intersect, and suggests implications for policy.

Addresses inequity to increase participation among socially disadvantaged groups

- Determines policy recommendations for reducing inequity in physical activity and provides practical guidance and examples across the 'best investment' domains and priority areas in the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity.

Physical activity surveillance

- Presents the concept of a comprehensive physical activity surveillance system, or PASS, that can assess individuals, organisations, settings and sectors, and their relationships in a physical activity system over time.

Policy domains for action



Education



Transport



Built
environment



Primary and
secondary
healthcare



Communication



Community



Workplace



Sport and
recreation



Access the full report here: preventioncentre.org.au

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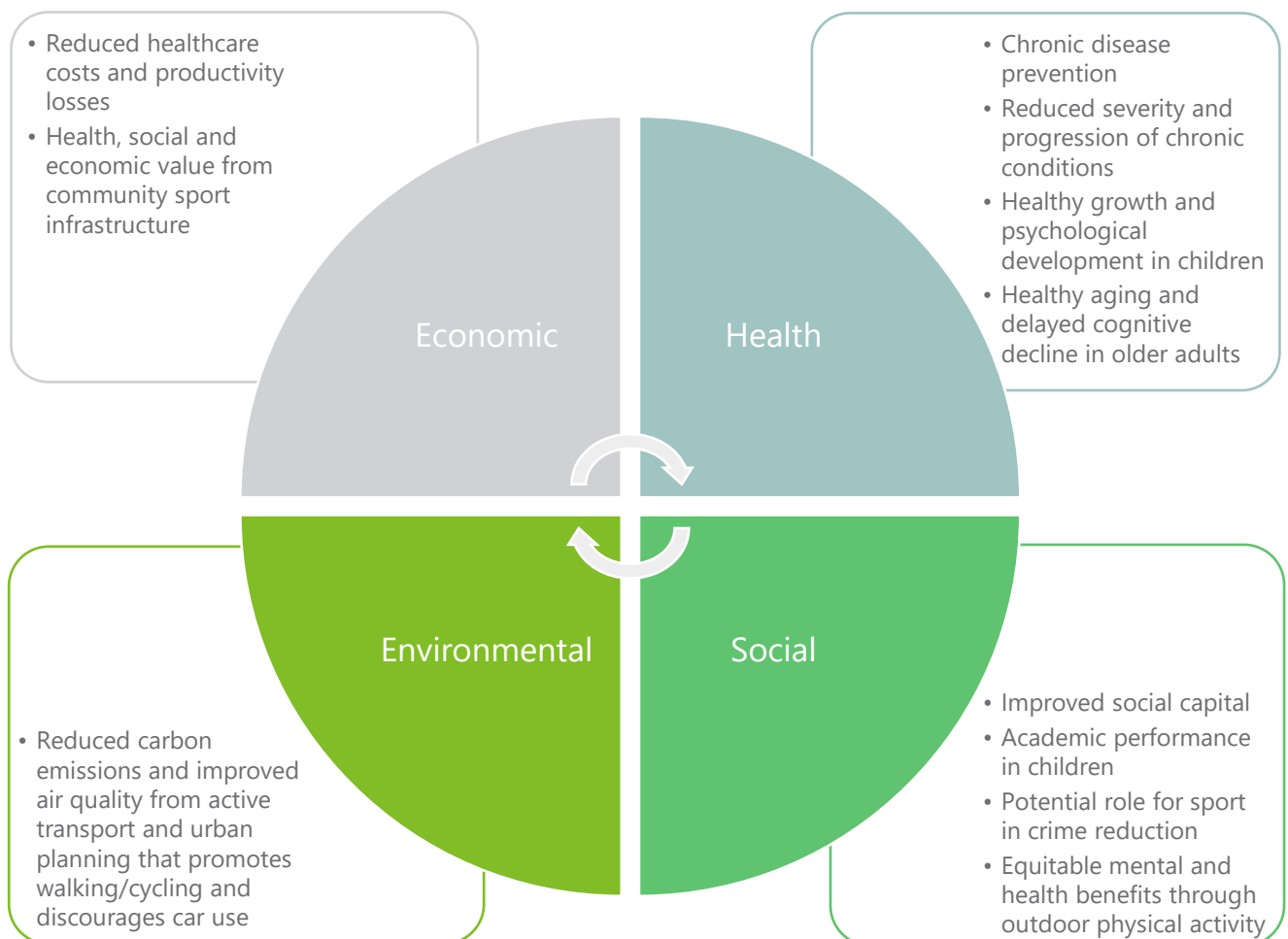


The co-benefits of physical activity promotion

Key messages

- A more active Australian society would result in multiple benefits beyond the health sector.
- Promoting physical activity is relevant to every sector as it would result in social, economic and environmental co-benefits.
- Physical activity is a best buy for society as a whole; addressing physical inactivity should be a societal and cross-sectoral priority.
- Thinking of the bigger picture and communicating the co-benefits of physical activity to other sectors helps provide a core rationale for cross-sectoral strategies and partnerships.

Examples of co-benefits from addressing physical activity



What are the recommendations for investment and action?

Multisectoral or societal perspective

- Adopt a multisectoral or societal perspective to promote and leverage the existing evidence of co-benefits

Systems science approach

- Use a systems science approach to examine, forecast and compare health, economic and environmental outcomes of policies, programs and interventions to increase physical activity

Dynamic simulation modelling

- Develop and test a dynamic simulation model of the complex system of behavioural, structural and environmental factors contributing to population physical activity in Australia

Whole-of-government investment strategy

- Develop a whole-of-government investment strategy with long-term funding commensurate with the economic burden of physical inactivity, and the health, social and economic returns on investment

Investment focus

- Configure investment to ensure efforts to achieve an active population, focus on those who are currently least active and who have the most to gain by undertaking some regular physical activity

Whole-of-life course perspective

- Think about the life course when considering investment to encourage participation. Note the drop off in participation in organised sport among young adults and the need for a broad intersectoral perspective to find movement solutions that are fit for purpose for most Australians

Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapter 1.1** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: preventioncentre.org.au



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Whole-of-systems approaches to physical activity

Key messages

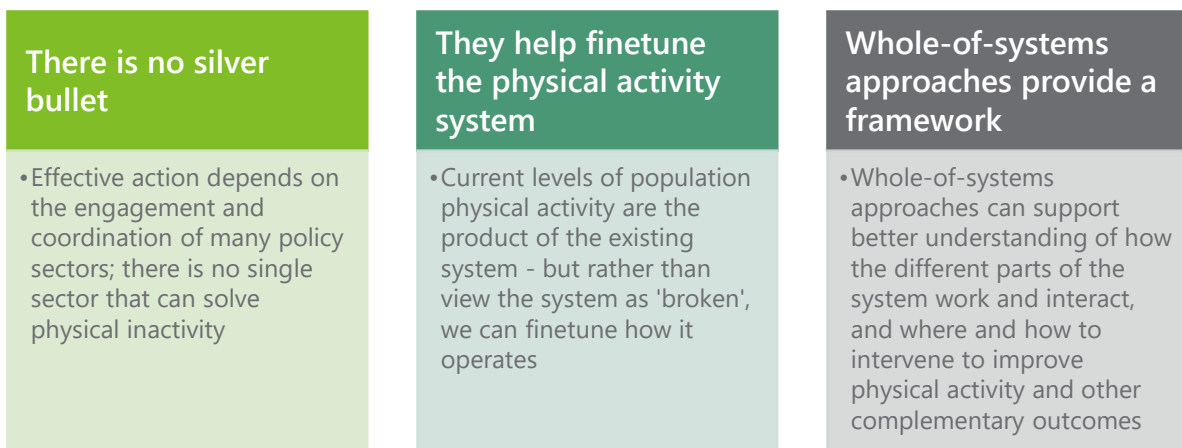
- Physical inactivity is a complex problem and there are no simple, single solutions.
- Effective action requires an integrated, system-wide approach in consultation with policy makers and stakeholders from multiple sectors.
- A whole-of systems approach highlights the inter-relationships, interactions and various perspectives in the systems that influence physical activity. It helps policy makers understand how different parts of the systems work and interact, and how and where to intervene to improve physical activity.
- Whole-of-systems approaches are built on a participatory process that brings together best available evidence, data and expert and local knowledge, enabling stakeholders to better align agendas for action.

What is a whole-of-systems approach for physical activity?

A useful metaphor for understanding whole-of-systems approaches is that of a bicycle.

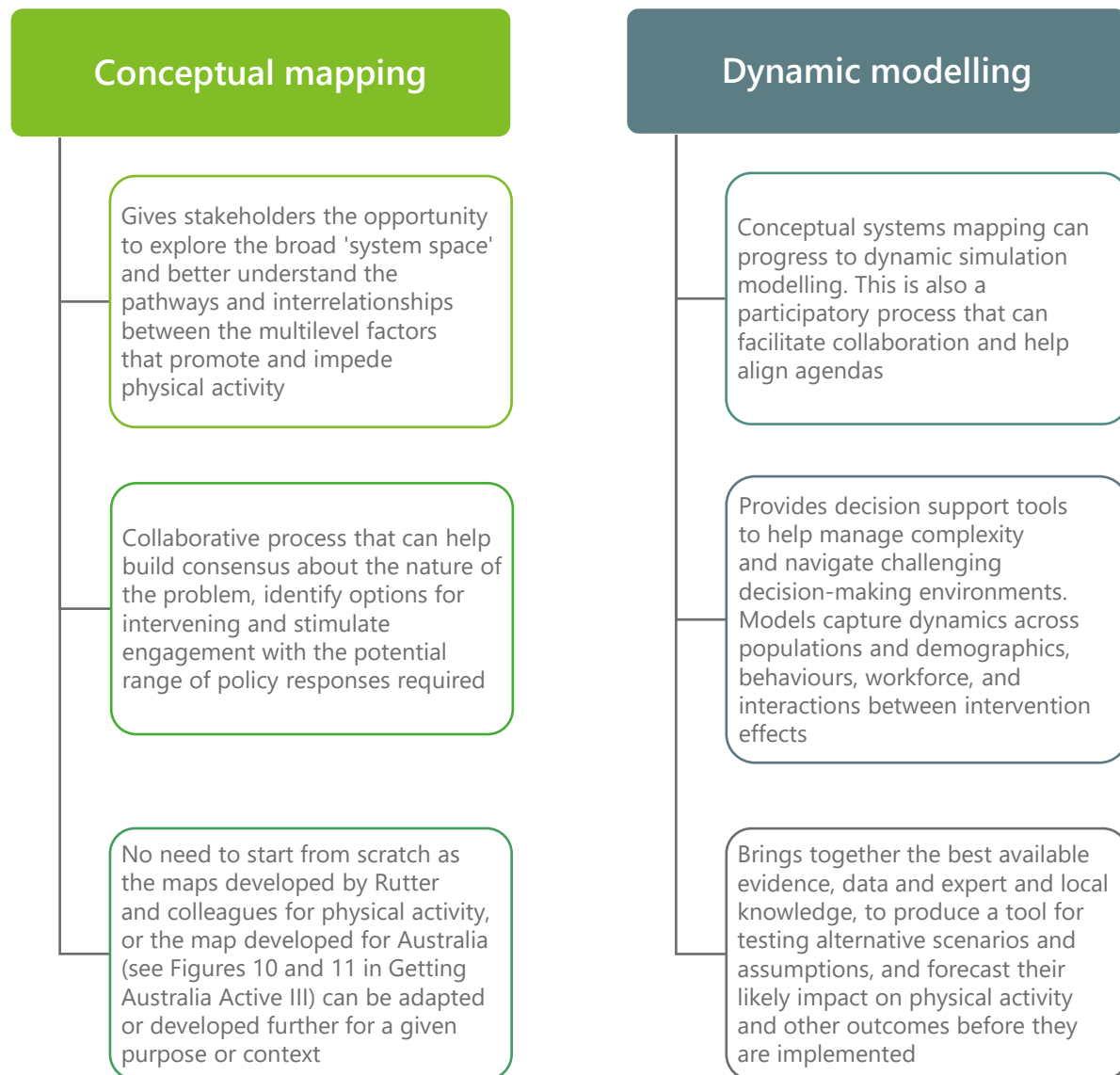


Why are whole-of-systems approaches important for physical activity?



How can I apply whole-of-systems approaches to physical activity?

There is a continuum of approaches to whole-of-systems thinking, ranging from conceptual mapping through to dynamic modelling.



Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapters 2.1 and 2.2** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: preventioncentre.org.au



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The education domain and physical activity

Key messages

- Every aspect of education should be conducive to physical activity where possible.
- Both structured and unstructured physical activity should be promoted, accessible and supported throughout all education phases for better student performance and lifelong health.
- School-based physical activity interventions are cost-effective.
- Schools need to be encouraged to achieve the recommended standard of children being physically active for at least 50% of allocated physical education (PE) time.
- There is an urgent need for programs to build physical literacy at preschool, with reinforcement in primary and secondary school.

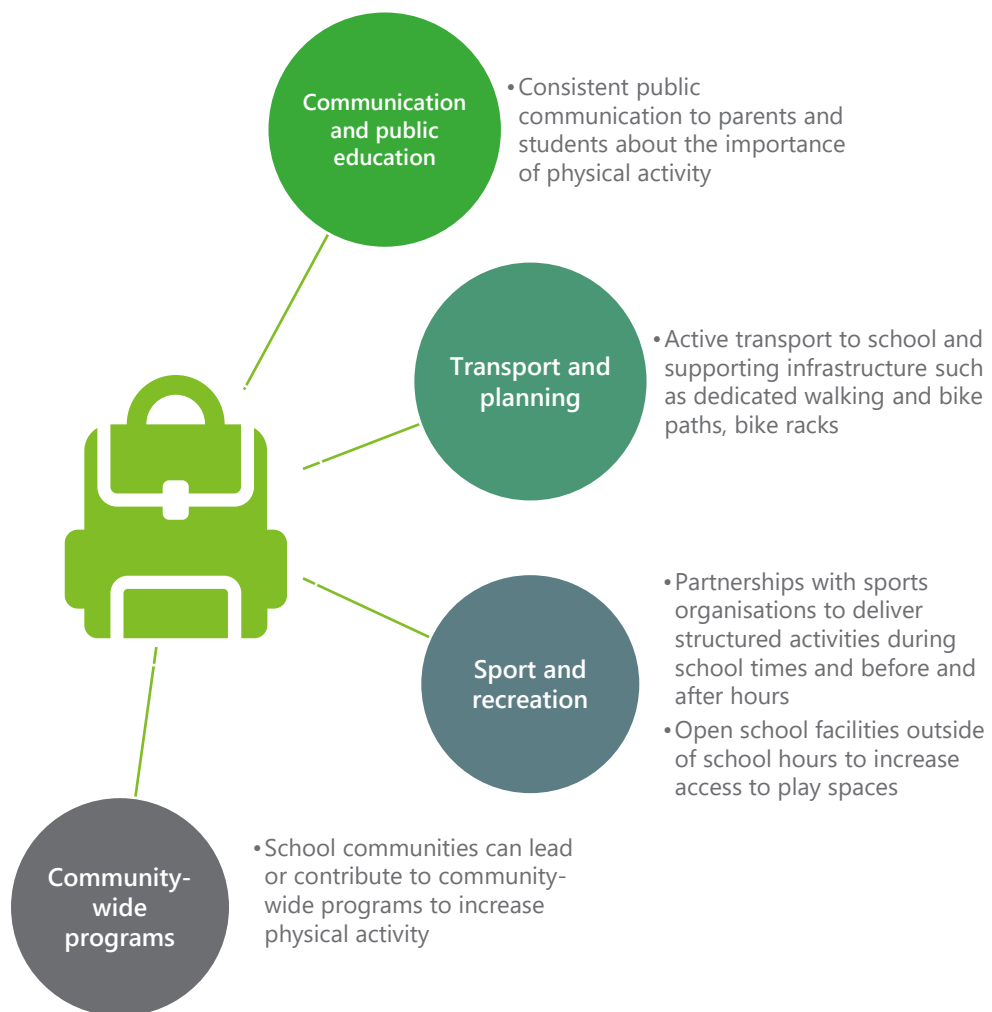
Why is it important to address the education domain?

Learning how to be physically active is as important for students' life trajectories as literacy or numeracy. Educational settings offer an opportunity to reach a large section of the community over many years. Quality PE helps establish lifelong active lifestyles, with mutual physical, social, psychosocial and cognitive benefits. Physical activity also improves students' concentration and academic performance.

What are the recommendations for action and investment?

Physical activity policies for education settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish physical activity policies with clear language • Specify monitoring and accountability mechanisms specific to each sub-category (including PE, physical literacy, active school transport, school environment)
Use of theory and/or logic models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use theory and/or logic models to inform planning, implementation and evaluation of school-based approaches to physical activity [see Table 14 of GAA III for recommended design specifications for whole-of-school programs]
Increase compliance with recommended standards for PE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more schools to achieve the recommended standard of adolescents being physically active for at least 50% of allocated PE time • Mandate delivery of high-quality organised physical activity, including scheduled PE that focuses on developing physical literacy • Provide targeted support to support PE teaching in disadvantaged areas
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funding to programs and environmental improvements to enable physical activity • Fund professional development to equip primary and secondary teachers with the necessary competence to deliver innovative programs
Physical literacy continuum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress students along the physical literacy continuum through structured curricular activities and ensure accountability by reporting against standards • Support early intervention programs for 3-6 year-olds to build physical literacy (including Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS)) in preschool • Strengthen FMS acquisition in primary school and into secondary school
Standardised surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop standardised surveillance for physical activity across the life course • Regularly measure children's height and weight, fundamental movement skills and physical activity at key stages of primary and secondary schools, with opt-out (passive) consent

What are examples of strategies that intersect with the education domain?



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The transport domain and physical activity

Key messages

Walking and cycling should be safe, convenient and accessible to improve health. Best-buy investments include:

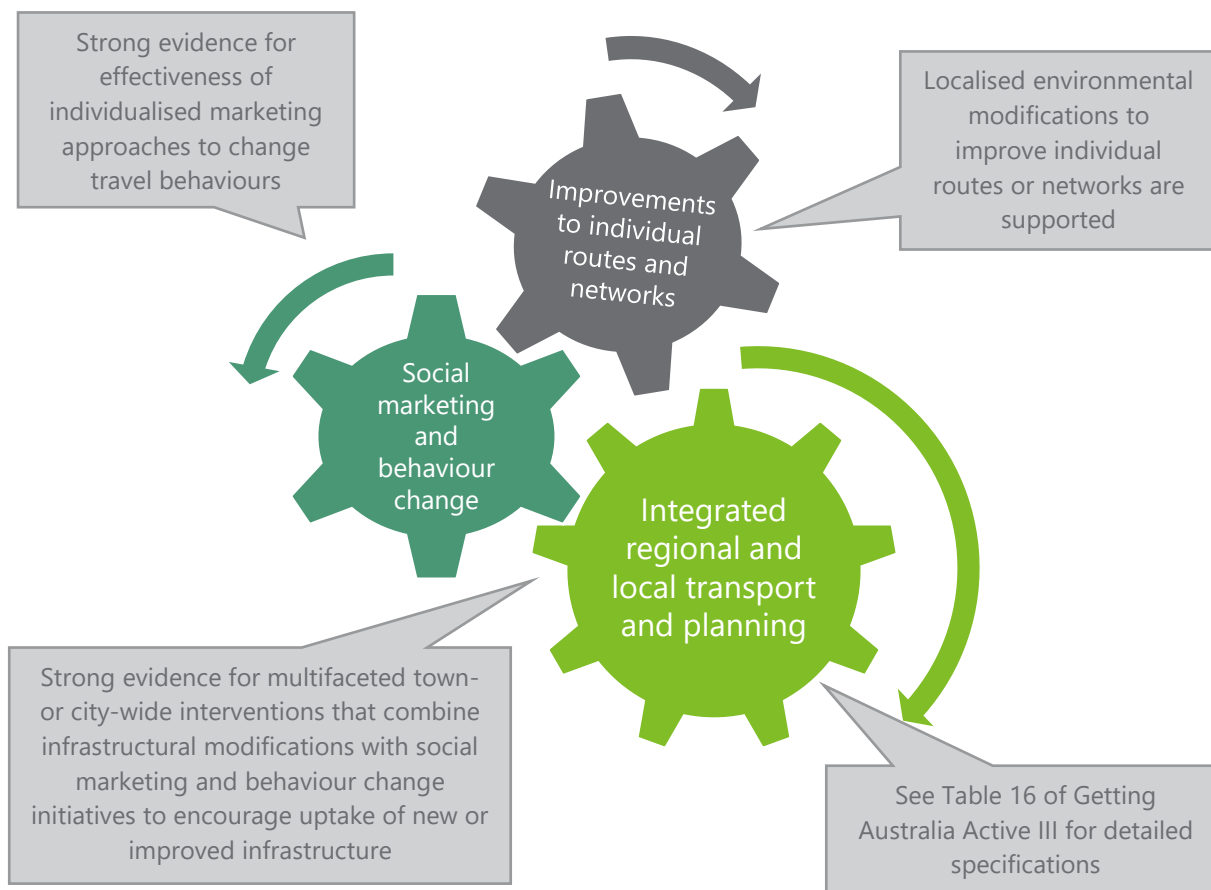
- Connected street networks, including footpaths and cycling infrastructure
- Easy access to a diversity of destinations and public transport
- Sufficient population density to make mixed-use planning and public transport services viable.

Why is it important to address the transport domain?

Active transport complemented by public transport, especially walking and cycling, provides significant health benefits and reduces mortality. It also addresses the problems of urban traffic congestion, environmental pollution, and climate change.

More than many other forms of physical activity, walking and cycling (particularly for transport) are easily incorporated into daily routines. This increases their potential for widespread adoption and maintenance over time, and for enhancing health and social equity.

What works?



What are the recommendations for investment and action?

Integrated package of transport and planning interventions

- Align at regional and local levels to create safe, convenient and comfortable opportunities and environments for active travel while reducing the attractiveness of private car use

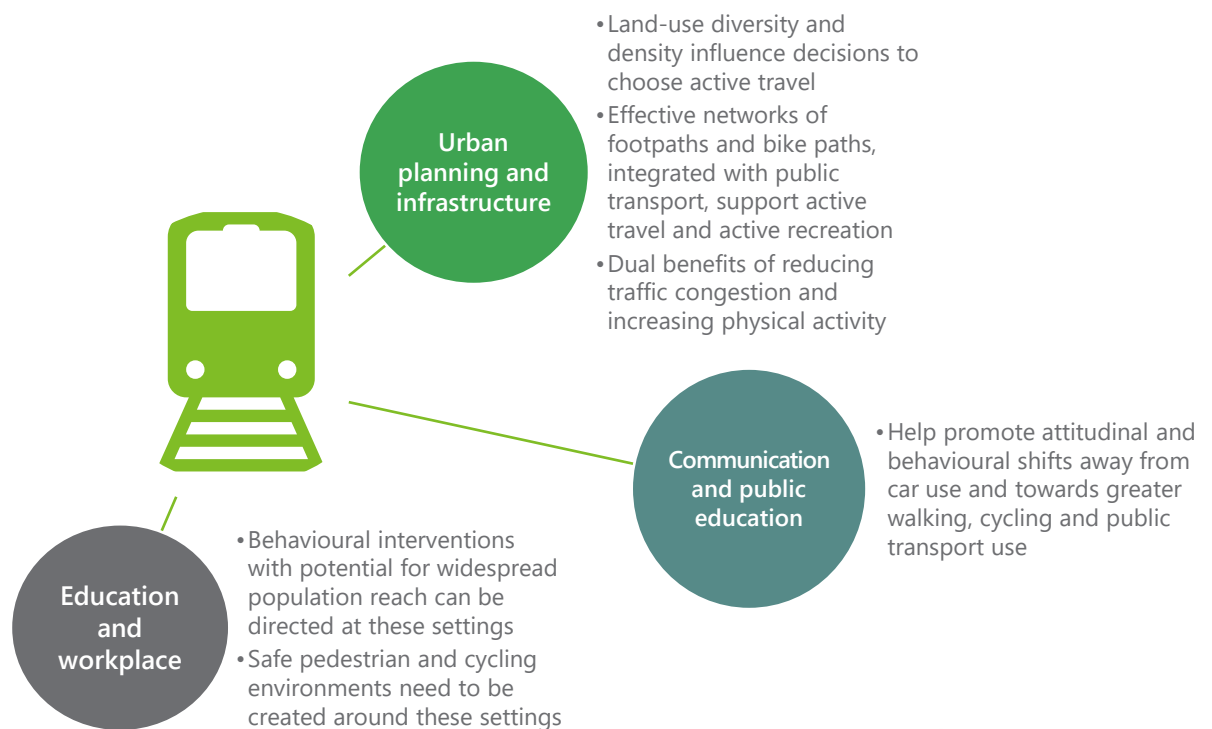
Behavioural and social marketing

- Consider behavioural change interventions along with infrastructural interventions to shift social norms and travel preferences
- Incorporate into other settings (e.g. workplaces and schools) to encourage active commuting
- Ensure target populations have the benefit of supportive infrastructure to facilitate changes in travel modes

Improve knowledge about what works and for which groups

- As a requirement of active travel funding, introduce robust evaluation of interventions (i.e. control groups where possible, long-term follow ups 3+ years, demographic and physical activity profiles of beneficiaries, economic or value-for-money evaluation)

What are examples of strategies that intersect with the transport domain?



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The built environment domain and physical activity

Key messages

The built environment should support walking. This can be done through urban design that:

- Makes active transport safe, attractive, affordable and desirable
- Prioritises wide pedestrian paths and cycling lanes over motorised transport
- Makes neighbourhoods safe, pleasant and accessible
- Locates jobs, residences and schools where they can be accessed via active transport
- Supports 'density for liveability', that is, a critical mass of population to support local services, amenities and infrastructure.

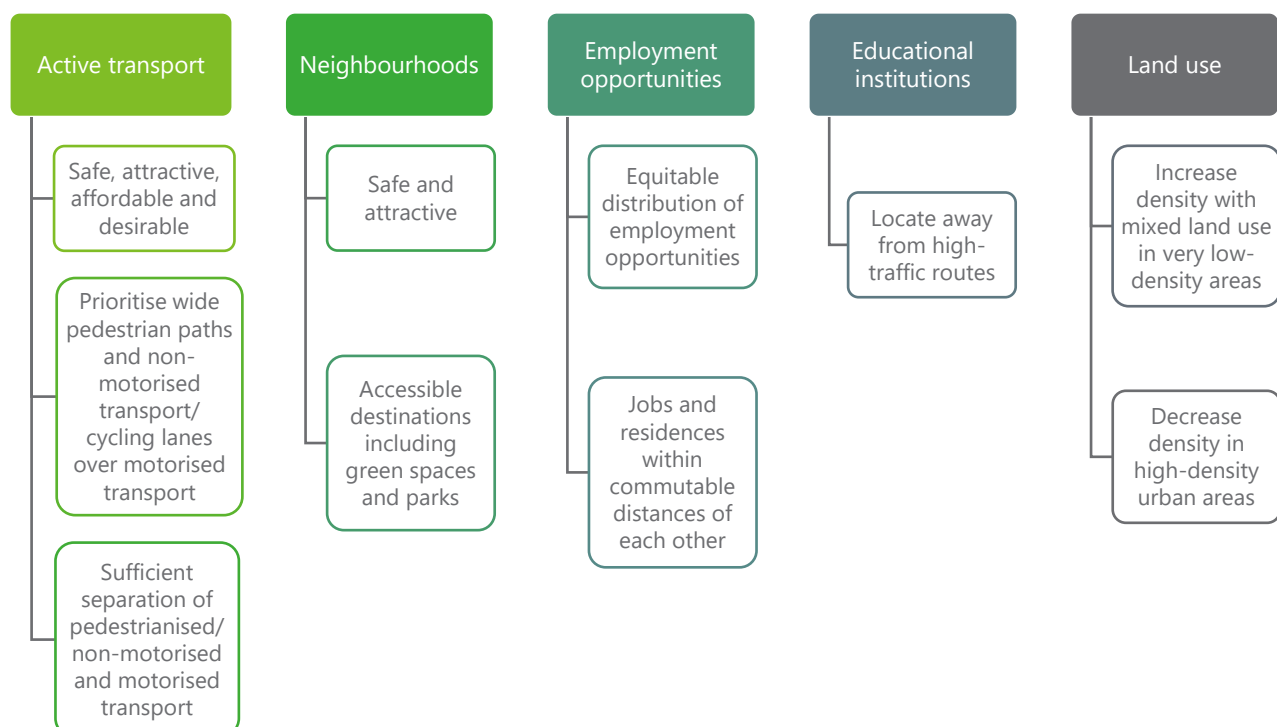
Why is it important to address the built environment domain?

People's physical activity is embedded in the built environment surrounding them. The built environment includes workplaces, schools, home, shops, and the space between these places. Urban design and infrastructure also includes public open space and green areas, footpaths, cycleways, and public transport systems. A better built environment encourages walking – the most common form of physical activity which is accessible across sociodemographic groups and has good potential to influence the most inactive in society in an equitable manner.

Note: The Transport Domain is addressed separately in Chapter 3.2 of the Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) report and in the corresponding Summary on the Transport Domain and physical activity.

What are the recommendations for action and investment?

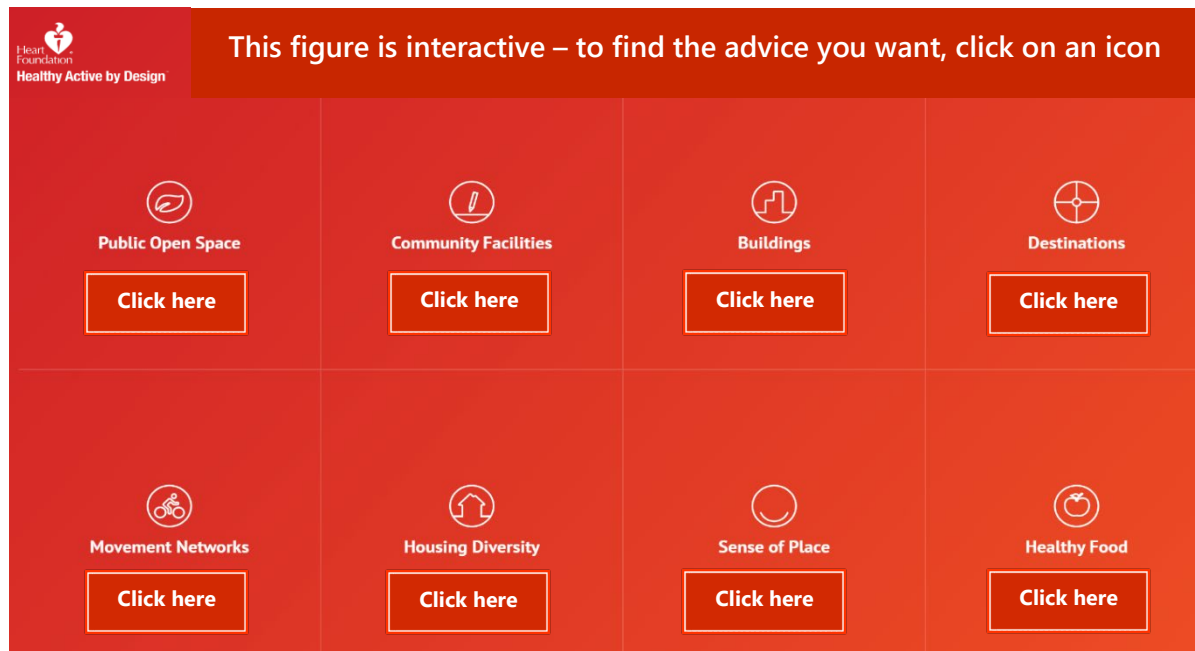
Active built environments should consider the following areas (refer to Table 16 in GAA III for further details):



Useful toolkits and resources

Healthy Active by Design

The Heart Foundation's 'Healthy Active by Design' web-based toolkit provides a one-stop-shop of useful advice, resources and case studies on how to plan environments in Australia for more physical activity and better health overall. Access it here, in this interactive 2 x 4 matrix:



Community sport infrastructure



Sport and recreation are covered by a range of standards. Facility requirements and standards are available from the governing body for each sport. The [Australian Sports Directory](#) provides a list of National Sporting Organisations recognised by the Australian Sports Commission.

In NSW, the [Community Sport Infrastructure Resource Library](#) provides a guide for the planning, design and construction of innovative, sustainable and fit-for-purpose community sporting infrastructure. This includes a web portal with resources to assist with best practice design specification.

Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapter 3.3** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: preventioncentre.org.au



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The primary and secondary healthcare domain and physical activity

Key messages

- Counselling by a general practitioner (GP) or other health professional, properly implemented, is one of the best buys for promoting physical activity. It is highly effective and cost-effective.
- Discussion of physical activity should be a critical component of all clinical care for all patients.
- Health professionals need more support and resources to promote physical activity in their communities.
- Policy change is needed to elevate the importance of physical activity in routine practice, upskill the healthcare workforce, and build organisational capacity for delivering physical activity interventions.

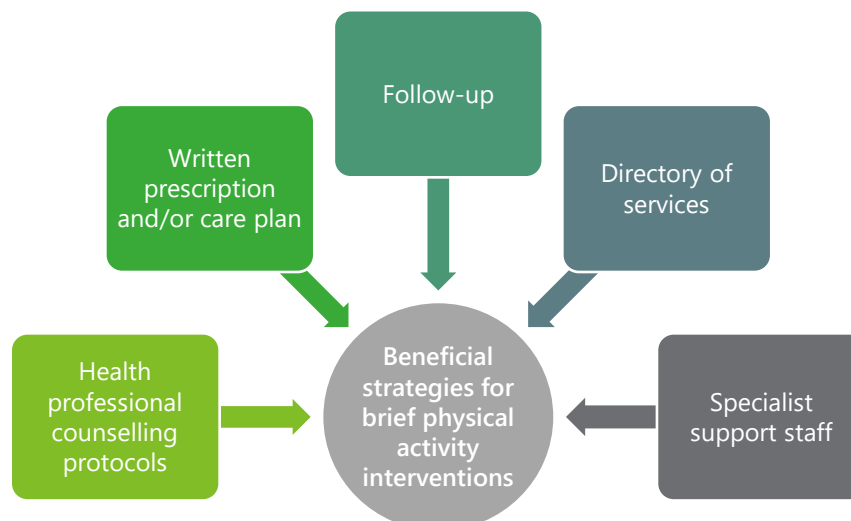
What is the role of healthcare providers in physical activity promotion?

Primary and secondary healthcare providers are at the forefront of direct, one-to-one provision of information, advice and support for physical activity in Australia. They also deal with the consequences of chronic disease every day.



What works?

Beneficial elements that can support or be incorporated into brief physical activity interventions include the following.



What are the recommendations for investment and action?

Leadership

(Departments of health, professional associations, credentialling bodies, non-government public health organisations)

- Increase understanding that physical activity promotion is an essential and evidence-based component of health service provision
- Help shift awareness and attitudes towards physical activity as an issue relevant to many areas of clinical care by developing and disseminating consensus statements and practice guidelines

Skill development

(Pre- and in-service)

- Provide foundational education in physical activity assessment, prescription and counselling in university courses for health professionals, incorporating behaviour change models and practice-based learning
- Provide professional development to improve knowledge and skills in physical activity prescription for different health conditions, models of multidisciplinary care, and systems to support physical activity integration into practice

Organisational change

- Improve quality and efficiency of physical activity advice and counselling through enabling elements such as practice systems that embed physical activity advice and counselling within day-to-day service delivery
- Encourage widespread adoption of enabling elements through accreditation standards and incentive schemes

Financial support

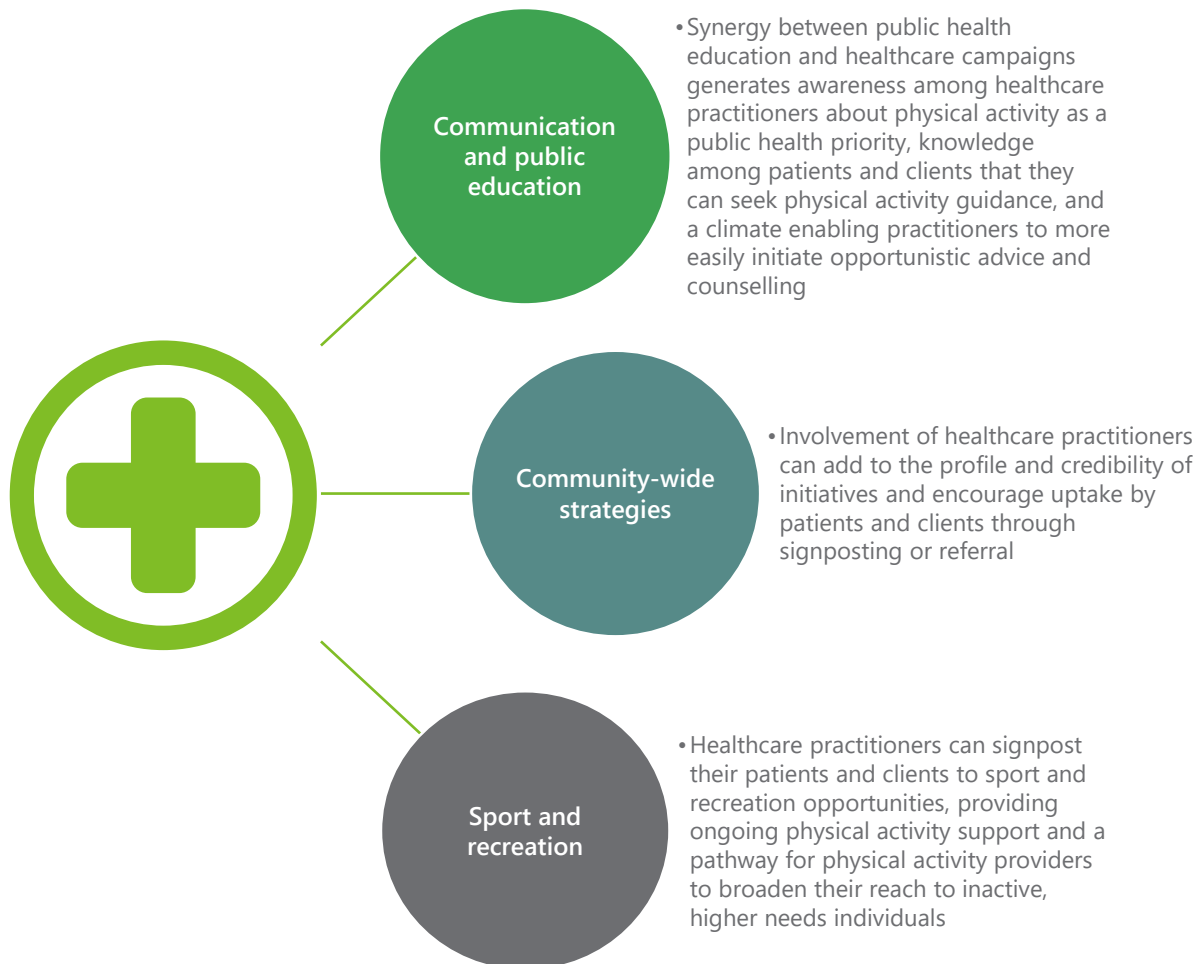
- Maintain General Practice Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements to enable multidisciplinary engagement in physical activity prescription, support and intervention
- Improve practitioner readiness and capacity to address physical activity within routine service delivery through government-funded resources and training opportunities

Partnerships

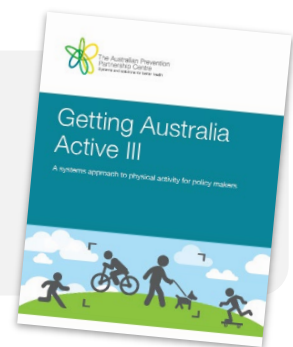
(Healthcare and providers of physical activity facilities and programs)

- Support the signposting of initiatives to patients and clients through communication and information sharing between healthcare practitioners and physical activity providers
- Encourage partnerships between physical activity providers and health practitioners with specialist skills in exercise prescription to assist the suitable design and adaptation of physical activity opportunities for those with particular needs and/or limitations

What are examples of strategies that intersect with the healthcare domain?



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Mass media-based social marketing campaigns for physical activity

Key messages

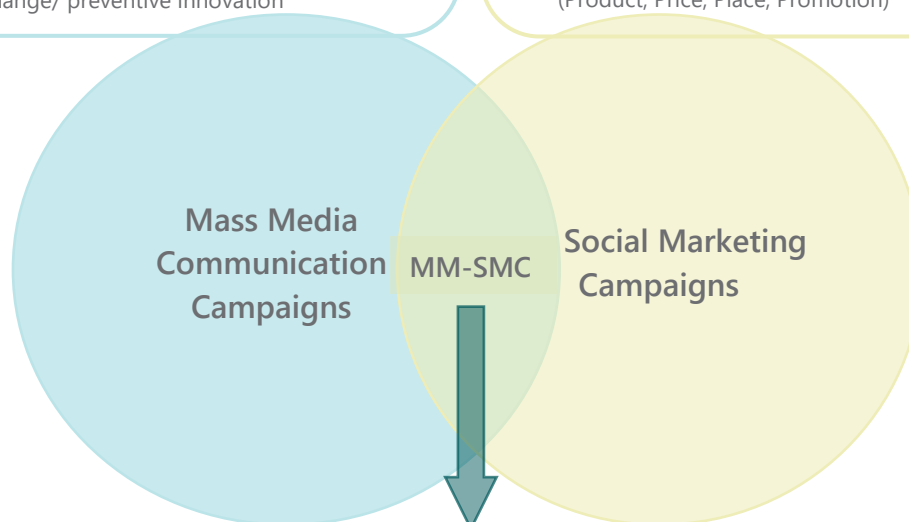
- Mass media campaigns do not work when implemented in isolation.
- To be effective, they must form part of an integrated strategy along with policy actions, programs, services, products and environments. This is called a 'mass media-based social marketing campaign'.
- Mass media-based social marketing campaigns, properly implemented, are one of the best buys for the promotion of physical activity.

What does a 'mass media-based social marketing campaign' for physical activity look like?

Mass media campaigns should be designed as one part of a broad social marketing strategy, encompassing complementary policy and environmental changes as well as a promotional/communication component.

1. Relatively large audience within a defined community or population
2. Can be used for agenda-setting, to shift social norms, signpost potential change options or information-seeking steps
3. Greater chance of success when the targeted behaviour is simplified or one-off rather than complex or long-term
4. Diffusion process typically begins slowly but accelerates when 15–25% of the target audience adopts the behaviour change/ preventive innovation

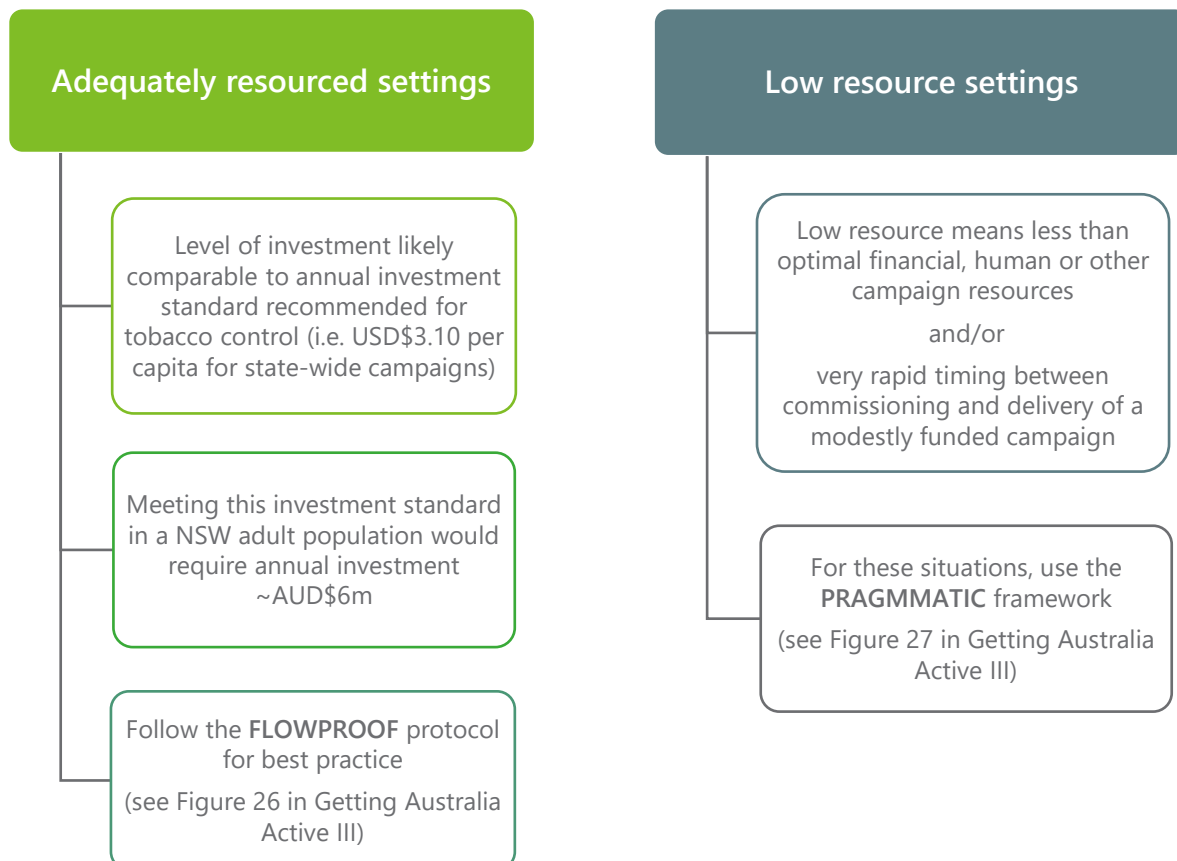
1. Involve intervention(s) to change health-related behaviour that provide adequate social value to justify efforts required for the person to change their behaviour
2. Target specific group(s) and segments audience based on particular characteristics
3. Are guided by behaviour change theory
4. Employ a mix of methods for development and implementation, including the 4Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion)



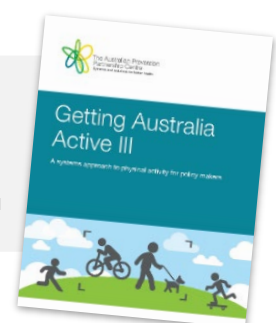
1. Integrate mass media and social marketing approaches
2. Incorporate 4Ps approach of marketing: Promotion (e.g. mass media communications) / Product (e.g. programs and brand) / Price (e.g. financial cost, time or opportunity cost of behaviours) / Placement (e.g. social, commercial, digital, physical environments)
3. Comply with best practice principles (e.g. FLOWPROOF)
4. Incorporate digital and social media within an integrated channel mix, and use research and evaluation to refine cost-effectiveness of impactful campaigns

How do I develop a mass media-based social marketing campaign for physical activity?

In adequately resourced settings, the FLOWPROOF protocol should be followed for best practice. Where FLOWPROOF cannot be followed, consider whether investments are better directed towards other actions that can be fully funded (rather than risk underinvestment and marginal impact). Otherwise, following the PRAGMMATIC framework in this scenario can help maximise use and availability of campaign resources and optimise impact.



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Community-wide programs and physical activity

Key messages

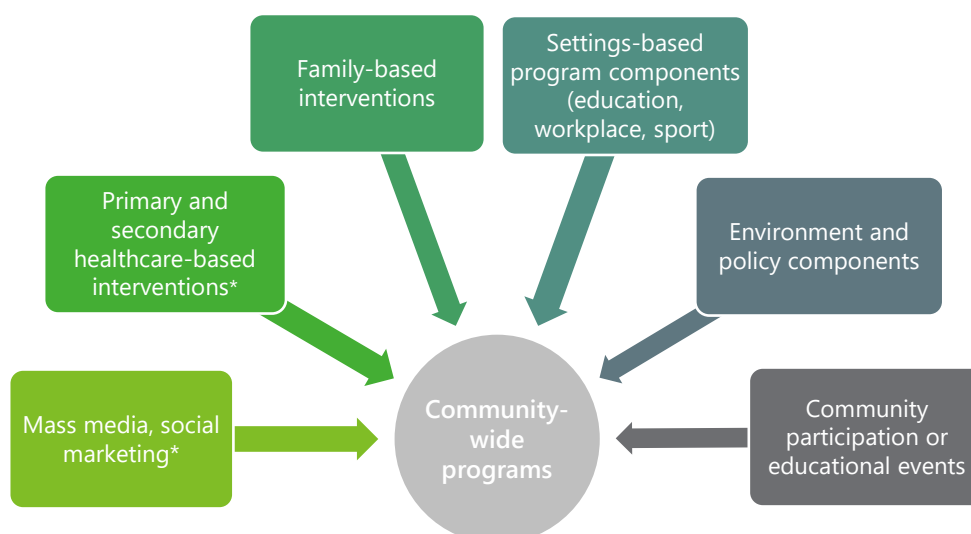
- Community-wide programs apply multiple evidence-based strategies (from the other seven domains) and involve most residents and institutions within localities to increase population levels of physical activity.
- One size does not fit all for communities. The right mix of coordinated strategies is needed to address all the different factors that influence physical activity in each unique community.
- Community-wide programs involve finding ways of adapting evidence-based strategies to the needs of an entire local area, town or city.
- The WHO 'best buys' for physical activity are mass media campaigns and programs in primary and secondary healthcare – these are very good strategies to use as the basis of a community-wide mix of programs.
- Community-wide programs work best when they build on the existing strengths of a community.

Why is it important to address the community domain?

The World Health Organization has identified community-wide programs as the most cost-effective approach to increasing population physical activity. Community-level action also plays a valuable role in reaching and supporting socially disadvantaged people, who are likely to experience greater barriers and fewer opportunities for physical activity in their lives.

What works?

Physical activity in populations is influenced by multiple factors at multiple levels, including individual, interpersonal, organisational, environmental and policy factors. Community-wide programs to promote physical activity must use a mix of coordinated strategies to address these multilevel determinants. Systems thinking and its methods make it possible to identify critical determinants of physical activity within communities and facilitate coordinated action by partner agencies to modify them. Evidence-based actions derive from the other seven domains described in Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) and may include any of the following:



* WHO has specified these components as 'best buys' overall so it is reasonable to suggest that these might be prioritised as components of a community-wide approach.

An assets or strength-based approach

It is recommended to:

- Encourage individuals from within communities to lead and facilitate co-production and delivery of programs and services
- Recognise the unique assets in communities during planning and implementation; this allows for use of the existing capacity and resources in communities and increases a program's likelihood of effectiveness.

What are the recommendations for investment?

Government and non-government agencies can improve the implementation and impact of community-wide physical activity strategies by addressing the following:

Capacity building

- Disseminate evidence, case studies and models for community-wide physical activity promotion to organisations that can provide leadership for community-wide strategies (particularly regional health authorities, local councils and sport and recreation bodies)
- Provide training in systems mapping, co-design and collective impact to improve capacity for effective collaborative action

Intersectoral collaboration

- Develop cross-sectoral partnerships and commitments to physical activity promotion at the state and/or national level that can assist collaboration in communities among important providers of physical activity programs and infrastructure (including those in education, transport, planning, sport and recreation)

Coordination with whole-of-population strategies

- Support the alignment of community-wide programs with strategies at the state or national level and improve their delivery and impact, such as by disseminating and encouraging the use of mass media messages and materials, guidelines for urban design and transport planning, and behaviour change strategies and resources for use in healthcare, education and other settings

What are examples of strategies that intersect with this domain?

Community-wide programs, by their nature, may intersect with all of the other seven domains for physical activity promotion described in GAA III. Mass communication, improvements to the built environment, and education delivered in workplaces and/or healthcare settings form the mainstays of these programs, but other combinations of strategies may be used depending on local needs and resources.

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The workplace domain and physical activity

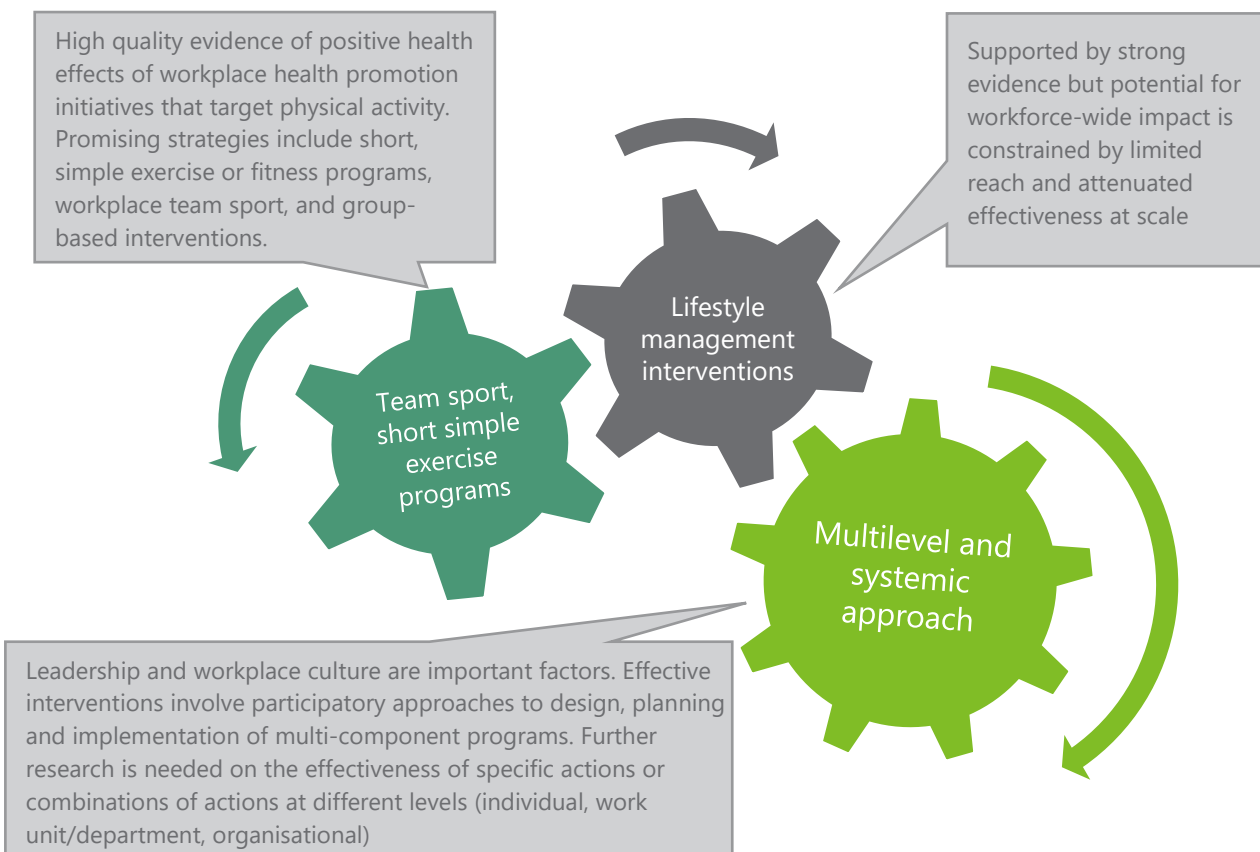
Key messages

- Physical activity in the workplace is good for productivity and worker health. Simple strategies work best to encourage physical activity at work, such as:
 - Encouraging active travel to and from work
 - Providing showers
 - Fitness programs and team sports.
- Using a health risk assessment (HRA) process to prioritise higher risk individuals can be even more cost-effective.
- Scaling up effectively is a key challenge for achieving workforce-wide impact and increasing reach. Implementation science and better collection and reporting of data on contextual influences will help address gaps in knowledge about implementation.

Why is it important to address the workplace domain?

The workplace is an important setting for physical activity policy because it allows access to much of the adult population. Reaching workers through the workplace is one way of enabling long-term, productive participation in the labour force while delivering numerous benefits for organisations and employees including reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and improved staff morale and sense of wellbeing.

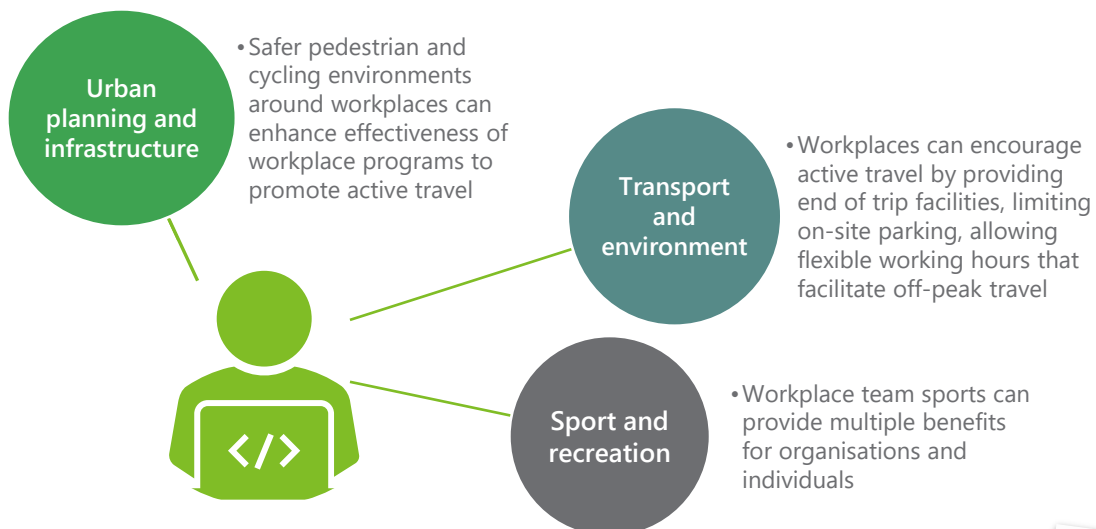
What works?



What are the recommendations for investment and action?

Multilevel and systemic approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence and international recommendations support a multilevel and systemic approach to physical activity promotion and reduction of sedentary behaviour in the workplace Leadership and workplace culture are important factors
Enable the prioritisation of physical activity promotion in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy makers can sponsor or endorse programs, deliver and/or provide resource support, and offer financial incentives for adoption of government-backed or delivered programs
Evaluate implementation (including contextual factors and economic outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government-backed or delivered programs need to be supported by evaluation of implementation, particularly the enablers and barriers that affect delivery Further evaluation is needed to clarify the health economics of workplace physical activity interventions
Systematic approach to health risk assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is promising evidence that even higher returns on investment can be achieved by focusing on high-risk employees. This can be achieved through a systematic approach to health risk assessment

What are examples of strategies that intersect with the workplace domain?



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The sport and recreation domain and physical activity

Key messages

Everyone can benefit from moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during sport. To increase participation in sport in Australia, there needs to be:

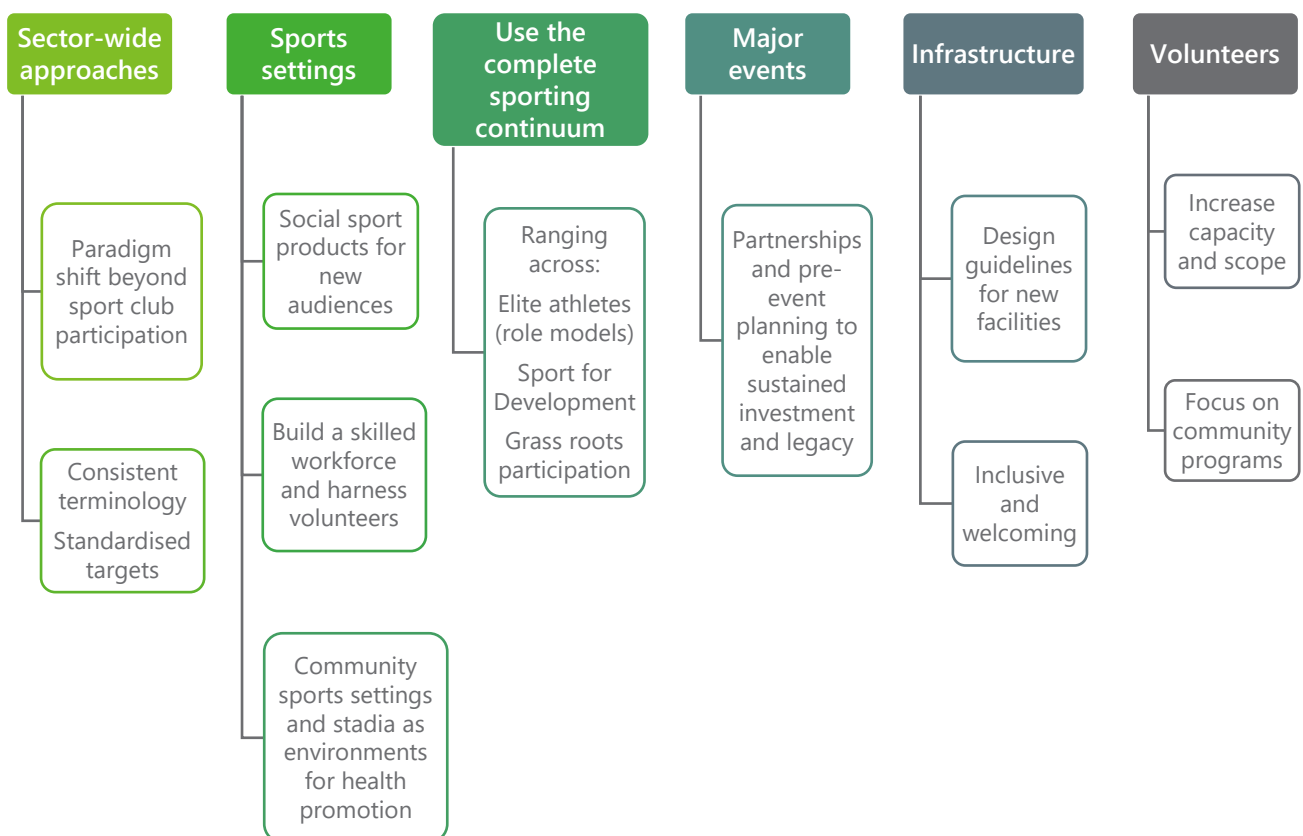
- A paradigm shift towards a 'sport for all' model – the idea that sport is not just about elite performance
- A repositioning of the sports system away from organised competitive sport and more towards social formats, targeting people across the life course.

Why is it important to address the sport and recreation domain?

Sport has significant potential to contribute towards the well-established health benefits of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. Ambitious participation targets have been set at the national level with Sport 2030 – National Sport Plan and consequently by many national sporting organisations.

However, sports clubs are not necessarily the main choice for sport or physical activity participation in Australia. People's preferences have also shifted towards less structured, more social formats. While more people are engaging in physical activity, participation in sport has remained steady. There is a challenge for sporting organisations to find ways to boost participation in social sport.

What are potential interventions?



What are the recommendations for investment and action?

Multisectoral approach and new or adapted offerings

- Apply multisectoral (cross-agency) approaches to support sport and recreation's delivery of physical activity programs
- Paradigm shift to develop and deliver new, modified and/or more flexible offerings for less active groups while maintaining engagement of existing participants throughout their life course

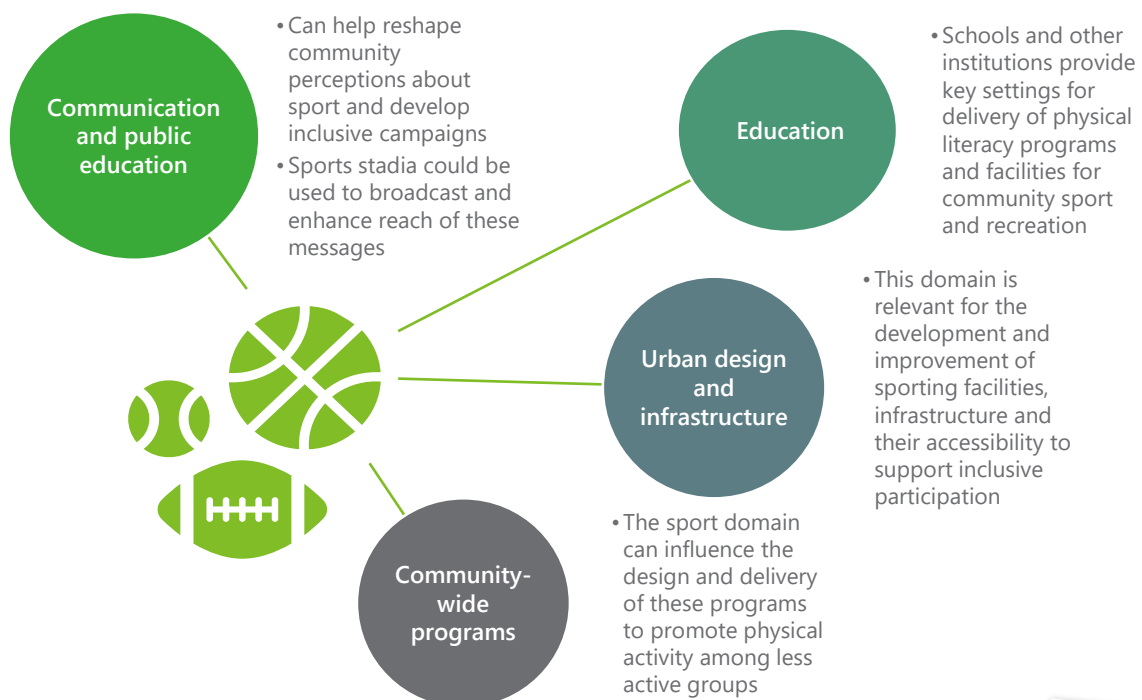
Standardised and sustained surveillance

- Develop a standardised and sustained surveillance of sport and active recreation in all Australian states and territories and at the federal level

Strategic principles and priority policy options

- Consider the recommendations from the Active and Inactive Young Australians review which are applicable across the life course. The strategic principles from this review are: (i) Human movement continuum (ii) Intersectoral approach (iii) Life course approach (iv) Whole-of-society benefit (v) Whole-of-systems approach

What are examples of strategies that intersect with this domain?



Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapter 3.8** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: preventioncentre.org.au



Funding for this research has been provided from the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). The MRFF provides funding to support health and medical research and innovation, with the objective of improving the health and wellbeing of Australians. MRFF funding has been provided to The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre under the MRFF Boosting Preventive Health Research Program. Further information on the MRFF is available at www.health.gov.au/mrff

Measuring physical activity at the population level

Key messages

- There are standardised ways of measuring population physical activity in Australia, but the measures are implemented slightly differently across jurisdictions in Australia.
- Standardisation of physical activity measures across jurisdictions is recommended to monitor physical activity progress towards the 2030 targets set by the World Health Organization and is essential to the development of better practice.
- The key features of physical activity measurement should include consistency, standardisation, and sustained usage for the prolonged periods of time required for policy and program implementation to have population-level effects.
- Work should embark on the development of a more comprehensive Physical Activity Surveillance System (a PASS), with measures and indicators defined and agreed across agencies and jurisdictions.
- A PASS should use a systems approach to assessing physical activity and will require cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral engagement, commitment and collaboration.

Why is it important to measure physical activity?

Physical activity is an important health-related indicator

- Physical activity is a key chronic disease prevention indicator
- Single estimates of the proportion of people meeting physical activity guidelines enable policy makers to make clear statements about the burden of disease and disability attributable to physical inactivity
- As part of broad national and regional health surveys, estimates of physical activity provide essential information to policy makers, practitioners and governments

Relevance across multiple sectors and strategies

- Components of physical activity are important beyond the health sector
- Elements are relevant to sectors such as sport, education, transport, urban planning and infrastructure, parks and recreation, and wellbeing and wellness strategies
- Using comparable measures will enable cross-agency data utilisation and comparisons between sectors and over time

To track progress towards important targets

- Australia is a signatory to WHO global targets for health and preventive health (also linked to the WHO Sustainable Development Goals)
- The monitoring of physical activity is one of the key chronic disease prevention targets, with a goal of a 15% reduction in population levels of physical inactivity by 2030
- Coordinated and standardised monitoring of physical activity (and the broader physical activity system) is essential to assess progress towards this and other important health and cross-sectoral goals

What is best practice in physical activity measurement?

The overall purpose of physical activity measurement is to assess the proportion of the population meeting physical activity guidelines, and measures should be designed with that purpose in mind.

Physical activity measurement can be obtained through self-report (e.g. through questionnaires, online responses or personal interviews), device-based measurement (e.g. accelerometers or pedometers), or inobtrusive population monitoring (e.g. through the use of information on smart phones, or future community-based surveillance).

Current best practice suggests that self-report measures are still the most feasible and affordable, and are recommended in population measurement and surveillance.

Important considerations for best practice physical activity measurement

Properties of optimal physical activity measures

- An optimal measure of physical activity will have properties of acceptable reliability and validity, sensitivity to change, and simplicity and clarity for use in population surveys
- It is important to consider whether to include measures that assess strength training and balance, and sedentary time (in addition to measuring aerobic activities e.g. walking, most sport, running, cycling, swimming)

Domains of physical activity

- Consider whether measures should focus on all domains of physical activity (occupational physical activity, domestic activity, active travel, and recreation or leisure activities) or whether physical activity should be measured globally; the latter involves fewer questions and less respondent burden in population surveys

Population subgroups

- Physical activity measurement needs to occur in population subgroups and in special populations
- Although most self-report physical activity measures can provide estimates by gender, age group, socioeconomic status and cultural background, special and additional surveys may be required for some specific groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations)

Repeat over time

- Physical activity measures should be repeated over time
- Current measures include the National Health Survey (conducted by the ABS) which has comparable measures dating back to the National Health Survey in 1989
- State-based measures typically use the Active Australia Questionnaire (developed in the late 1990s by the AIHW, it comprises six core questions that estimate population aerobic activity against the physical activity guidelines)
- Measures for children and adolescents are different, with a population target of 60 minutes a day that can be assessed by direct respondent measurement, parent or carer response as a proxy measurement, device-based measurement, or other means. Measures should meet the same properties expected of adult measures.

Towards a physical activity surveillance system (PASS)

Physical activity involves many different behaviours in different sectors and settings. For this reason, it is necessary to develop a systems approach to assessing physical activity. Changes in physical activity should be linked to changes in policy and program implementation, cultural or economic circumstances, infrastructure or urban form, and social norms around being physically active.

It is important to measure physical activity prevalence over time, as well as to assess cross-sectoral population measures over time (e.g. for the sport or transport sectors, among others).

A systems approach entails the development of a standardised set of measures and indicators beyond measuring prevalence alone. These measures:

- Would assess national and regional plans and policies and their implementation
- Would assess indicators of the built environment, transport and urban form
- May require organisational measures in settings such as workplaces and schools.

Such a comprehensive physical activity surveillance system (PASS) would need to have system-wide indicators and sustained measurement that is simple, affordable, comparable and adaptable between state, territory and national jurisdictions.

A PASS remains to be developed in Australia. The measures and indicators for a PASS would need to be agreed across agencies and jurisdictions, which would require substantial cross-jurisdictional commitment and collaboration.

Getting Australia Active III (GAA III) is an Australian guide for policy makers to support the implementation of a whole-of-systems approach to increasing population physical activity. This policy brief summarises key points from **Chapter 1.2** and **Chapter 5** of this guide. For more detailed guidance and supporting evidence, you can access the full report at: preventioncentre.org.au



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