

### **Promoting Physical Activity and Health Through Dog Walking**

**Presenter:** Jacqueline Epping, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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**Session:** Oral

**Date/Time:** Monday, April 23; 2-3PM

Lack of regular physical activity and increasing rates of obesity are significant health problems for both humans and dogs. There is a need to identify practical, accessible and effective strategies to increase physical activity at the population level that can be widely disseminated. Walking as a strategy to increase physical activity is of considerable interest to both researchers and practitioners, as walking is generally accessible to a large proportion of the population, and has been identified as a preferred form of physical activity among adults. Dog walking due to several important characteristics, may help a wide range of individuals initiate and maintain regular physical activity, and contribute to weight loss and improved health in both humans and canines. Dog walking, for example, may provide social support, motivation and a sense of purpose for many individuals to walk. The purpose of this session is to examine dog walking as a mechanism for promoting physical activity and contributing to weight loss. Presenters will describe the epidemiology of dog walking, provide a rationale for dog walking as a mechanism for promoting and increasing physical activity, and describe specific intervention studies to increase physical activity and or weight loss in persons at elevated risk for chronic disease.

#### **Biography:**

Jacqueline N. Epping is a Health Scientist and Team Leader in the Physical Activity and Health Branch, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She has focused on both older adults and children as populations in which to promote physical activity. Prior to joining the CDC in 1999, she directed the NHLBI-funded Lifestyle Education for Activity Project (LEAP) intervention, a school-based study to increase physical activity levels in high-school age girls and from 1991-1998 she was engaged in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Child and Adolescent Trial for Cardiovascular Health (CATCH) intervention, a NHLB-funded school-based study to improve nutritional and physical activity behaviors in elementary school children. Recent publications include *Growing Stronger: Strength Training for Older Adults* and "Dog Walking and Physical Activity in the United States," published in the April 2006 issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease*.

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