

# Making the move to exercise for overweight and obese people

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(Medical Xpress) -- How much exercise are overweight and obese people getting? More than many might think, according to research findings by nurses from Case Western Reserve University's Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing.

They reported their findings in the *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners* article, "Exercise and exercise intentions among obese and overweight individuals."

Deborah Walton Smith, who is now a senior lecturer at Gonzaga University, undertook the exercise study while a graduate student at Case Western Reserve. Also collaborating on the study were Joyce Fitzpatrick, the Elizabeth Ford Professor of Nursing, and Mary Quinn Griffin, assistant professor of nursing at Case Western Reserve.

Researchers surveyed the activities and intentions of 175 overweight and [obese people](#) who visited clinics run or owned by nurse practitioners in Spokane, Wash. Those individuals, who answered questions on several behavior tests, were 40 years old or older and had a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 or higher—the range for overweight and obese.

The investigators found that 29 percent had been exercising for six months, 39 percent regularly exercised and 25 percent contemplated exercising.

Only 12 percent had no desire or thoughts of getting active.

The findings are important to combat obesity health issues.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 34% of the population is obese, and the condition results in some 300,000 premature deaths annually due to diabetes, hypertension and coronary heart disease—all related to overweight issues. Secondary to the obesity problem is sedentary lifestyles.

Little information is available about the exercise habits of overweight and obese individuals visiting nurse practitioners. The study provides information to help enhance practices by these health professionals.

The level of obesity was higher than expected; many patients had a BMI at or above 31. A BMI score between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight and those at or above 30 are in the obesity range. Individuals were grouped in three classes of obesity, based on BMI scores from low (30-34.9), medium (35-39.9) and high (greater than 40).

Surprised by the level of exercise reported, Quinn Griffin said this study shows that just because someone is overweight does not mean they are not exercising or considering it.

Those with lower BMI scores in the obese range tended to exercise more. “This verified other research information that the higher their BMI, the less active people were,” Quinn Griffin said, adding this is reflective of the overall population.

Quinn Griffin also explained that the more one exercised, the more benefits individuals saw in being active.

The research offers information for NPs who see overweight or obese patients, may help them make decision about exercising, and then follow up on those intentions at future visits.

Quinn Griffin said nurse practitioners, who see patients for routine health visits and checks ups, have an opportunity to help people move from contemplating exercising to starting.

She added that because a nurse practitioner knows the individual's health condition, the health professional can tailor an [exercise](#) routine to benefit particular needs.

“They can also encourage taking small steps like starting out walking,” she said.

The study's participants were also asked if they had a dog at home. More than half did. A pet dog offers a beneficial reason for both the dog and person to take a walk.

Another small step can be to encourage individuals to purchase a pedometer. Only 28 percent of those surveyed reported owning one. Many do not realize how far they can walk in a short period of time, Quinn Griffin explained.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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