What we know about physical activity in American Samoa

A low level of physical activity is a common and critical risk factor for developing non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Physical activity can be measured in Metabolic Equivalent minutes or METS (1).

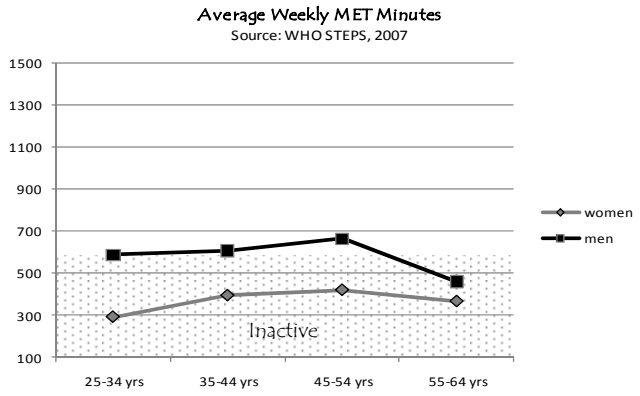
Physical Activity Scale in Metabolic Equivalent Minutes (MET) for ≥10 minutes activity

1 MET=	Energy spent sitting still
2-3METS=	Transportation by walking or cycling
4 METS=	Moderate physical activity (cleaning, farming, climbing stairs)
8 METS=	Vigorous physical activity (carrying heavy loads, strenuous sport)

Inactive	Moderately Active	Vigorously Active
<600 MET mins/week	600-1,500 MET mins/week	>1,500 MET mins/week

Adults

A survey of 2,072 adults ages 25-64 found that the majority have low levels of activity--66% of women and 59% of men. The average daily MET minutes for an adult is 69, or 483 MET per week. However, the median daily MET minutes is an alarming 13, or 91 per week showing a large portion of the population with extremely low levels of physical activity. Men get nearly twice as much physical activity as women each week. Men are physically active mostly during work hours (45 minutes/day) while women get most of their exercise during transportation (27 minutes/day). Adults are less physically active in leisure time then at work (1).



Youth

A survey of 3,625 public high school students found 18% of girls and 28% of boys are physically active for at least 60 minutes a day on 5 or more of the past 7 days. About one third of students watch 3 or more hours of television and play video games or used a computer for something other than school work for 3 or more hours on the average school day (2).

Studies conducted 2006-09 on the prevalence of overweight and obesity amongst school age youth found 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 5 boys engage in some sort of outdoor play on a typical school day, and only 5% of girls and 10% boys participate in some sort of strenuous after school sports activity (3). Most students feel they get an adequate amount of physical activity. However, boys in general are more likely to feel they are in need of more physical activity followed by obese girls (4).

Most elementary students rely on the bus and high school students usually take a car to and from school. As walking decreases and car use increases so to do student BMI scores rise (4). Students who perform more afterschool chores are less likely to be overweight (3), but it is friends rather than family who are more likely to encourage physical activity (5).

Sources

(1) American Samoa NCD Risk Factors STEPS Report. World Health Organization. March 2007. (2) American Samoa Youth Risk Behavior Survey summary, 2007. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and American Samoa Department of Education. (3) Vargo D. *Prevalence of Overweight in American Samoan Schoolchildren, 2007/2008 School Year: Report to the Directors Department of Health and Department of Education.* June 2008. (4) Vargo D. *Prevalence of Obesity Amongst American Samoa School Children 2008/2009 School Year: Report to the Directors Department of Health and Department of Education*. May 2009. (5) Faaiuaso G. *Obesity in American Samoa's female adolescents.* Community Cancer Network Community Cancer Investigator Program presentation given May 13, 2009. American Samoa Community College. NCI # U01CA114590

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