

For Immediate release

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**UNSURE HOW TO PREPARE FOR A HEALTHY OLD AGE?
ASK YOUR DOCTOR, SAYS THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON ACTIVE AGING**

VANCOUVER, B.C. (September 12, 2003) For many older adults, the information highway to better health could start in their doctor's office, says Colin Milner, CEO of the International Council on Active Aging, the world's largest senior fitness and wellness association. Milner believes the medical community is uniquely placed to guide older adults towards healthier lifestyle behaviors.

He points to a two-year study on sedentary adults that suggests exercise education programs-and even just a little guidance from a doctor-can help inactive people get moving (Journal of the American Medical Association 2001;286:677-687,717-719). When inactivity costs the United States \$76.6 billion annually, it behooves us all to get moving, says Milner.

Yet, despite the scientific evidence that being active has major implications for an older adult's well-being, only 52 percent of U.S. adults ages 50 or above were asked about their level of physical activity during a medical checkup in the previous year (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 2002;51:412-414). Doctors were also less likely to talk about exercise with patients who were older or less educated.

"The data send a message that there is an opportunity here to encourage older adults to become more active," says Dr. Judy Kruger of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. "Older adults are the least physically active, they have the most contact with the healthcare system and they regard physicians as a key source of advice.

The ICAA suggests that people ages 50 and above take an active approach to finding out more about physical activity from their healthcare providers. Here are some questions older adults can ask their physicians about becoming physically active:

- ✓ Can I exercise?
- ✓ What kind of exercise can I do?
- ✓ What kind of exercise should I avoid?
- ✓ How often can I do this exercise?
- ✓ How intensely can I do this exercise?
- ✓ How long should I exercise for?
- ✓ How do I know when to progress?
- ✓ Do I need any type of test beforehand?
- ✓ Should my exercise program be supervised or unsupervised?
- ✓ How will medication impact my exercising?
- ✓ Can you refer me to a qualified trainer or facility?
- ✓ Are you familiar with guidelines for exercise from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Heart Association or American College of Sports Medicine?

Older Americans stand to gain important health benefits through physical activity, including disease prevention. The ICAA encourages individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices, such as being more physically active and eating a balanced, healthy diet, and to seek the advice of their physicians in making these changes.

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The ICAA is the world's largest organization dedicated to changing the way we age by uniting and working with professionals in the retirement, assisted living, fitness, recreation, rehabilitation and wellness fields. It connects a community of like-minded professionals who share the goals of changing society's perceptions of aging and improving the quality of life for aging Baby Boomers and older adults within the six dimensions of wellness. The council supports these professionals with education, information, resources and tools, so they can achieve optimal success with this growing market.

The ICAA also takes an active role in helping to change the way society perceives aging. The council has joined 49 of the nation's most prominent health and aging organizations to work on the development and implementation of the National Blueprint on Aging. Contributors to the Blueprint's development include AARP, the American College of Sports Medicine, the American Geriatrics Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute on Aging and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Together with three other national organizations, the ICAA recently called on physicians across the U.S. to help solve the prevalence of ill health among older adults by prescribing exercise and other lifestyle changes. The other organizations involved were IDEA Health and Fitness Association, the world's leading membership organization of health and fitness professionals; American Society on Aging, a nonprofit organization committed to enhancing the knowledge and skills of those who work with older adults and their families; and Medical Fitness Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to medically based fitness, wellness and preventive healthcare.