



For more information:

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## **Point-of-Decision Prompts that Encourage People to Use the Stairs are Recommended to Promote Physical Activity**

Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life. Physically active people have a lower risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and some types of cancer. Despite all the benefits of physical activity, most people in this country are sedentary. Given that regular physical activity helps people enjoy better health, an important question is: what strategies work best in helping people become more physically active?

A systematic review of published studies, conducted on behalf of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services by a team of experts, found that point-of-decision prompts that encourage people to use the stairs instead of elevators or escalators are effective in getting people to be more physically active. On the basis of sufficient evidence of effectiveness, the Task Force recommends use of point-of-decision prompts.

### **Background on the Interventions**

- Point-of-decision prompts are signs placed by elevators and escalators that encourage people to use nearby stairs for health benefits or weight loss.
- These signs tell people about a health benefit from taking the stairs and/or remind people who already want to be more active that an opportunity to do so is at hand.
- Interventions evaluated were single-component interventions, in which placement of signs was the only action taken.

### **Findings from the Systematic Review**

- In all 6 studies reviewed, more people used the stairs when these signs were posted.
- The median net estimates from the reviewed studies suggest that placement of point-of-decision prompts can increase stair use by 54%.
- This intervention was shown to be effective in a variety of settings including train, subway, and bus stations, shopping malls, and university libraries and in a variety of population subgroups including men and women, both obese and not obese.
- Findings from several of the studies suggest that tailoring the prompts to describe specific benefits or to appeal to specific populations may increase the intervention's effectiveness. For example, in one study, obese people used the stairs more if the signs linked stair use to weight loss rather than to health benefits.

### **Publications:**

- **MMWR/Recommendations and Reports** – October 26, 2001/Vol. 50/ No. RR-18. [A report on findings.](#)
- **American Journal of Preventive Medicine** – Am J Prev Med 2002; 22 (4S); 73-102. [A report on evidence and findings.](#)

### **Resources:**

“How to” materials including downloadable signs can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell/index.htm>

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**The Guide to Community Preventive Services** (Community Guide) provides recommendations on population-based interventions to promote health and to prevent disease, injury, disability, and premature death, appropriate for use by communities and healthcare systems. For more information about the Community Guide (including links to publications and a variety of resources) see

[www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org) and for more information about the physical activity review see [www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/pa/).

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