



Arkansas Department  
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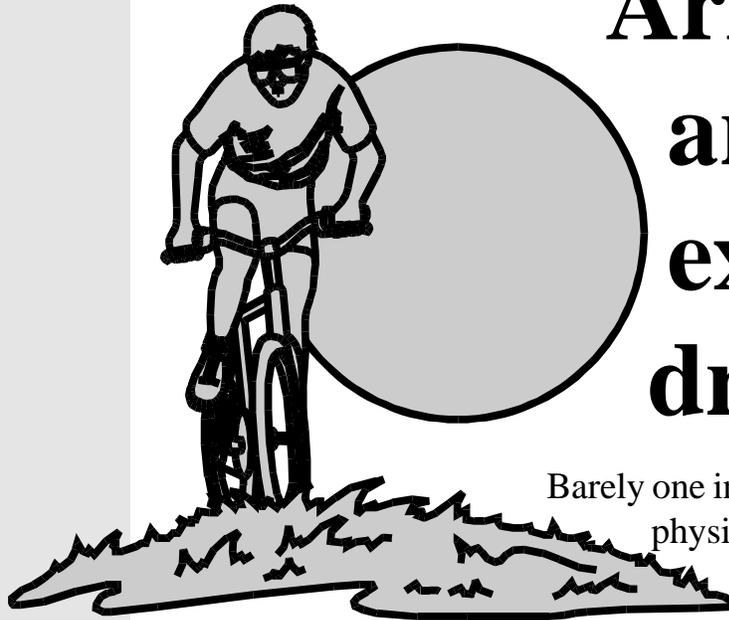
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# Arkansas Health Counts

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## Arkansans are avoiding exercise in droves

Barely one in 10 adult Arkansans engage in vigorous physical activity, according to a current survey. Only 11 percent exercised 20 minutes, three times a week at 50 percent capacity. More women (12 percent) than men (10 percent) engaged in vigorous physical activity.

You can benefit from even moderate levels of physical activity if you perform the activity regularly. Only about 18 percent of Arkansas adults get regular, sustained physical activity, including about 20 percent of men and 16 percent of women.

Residents of only eight other states were more sedentary. About 37 percent of adult Arkansans did not participate in any leisure time physical activity in 1996. That's an increase in inactivity from the 35 percent reported in 1994. The 1996 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey--the basis for all these exercise data--found that Arkansas women (38 percent) were more likely to avoid leisure time physical activity than men (36 percent).

### Modest Physical Investment

Widespread physical inactivity may contribute to as many as 200,000

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deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the 1996 *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*.

Physical activity is any body movement that burns calories. Many people mistakenly believe that vigorous exercise is necessary to be healthy. In fact, the quantity and intensity of physical activity necessary to improve health is within the reach of most people—30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least five days a week. That relatively modest investment in physical activity can pay big dividends, reducing the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, colon cancer, depression and anxiety, and of dying prematurely, especially from heart disease.

It also helps reduce high blood pressure, control weight, build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints, as well as increase psychological well being and strength and balance among older adults.

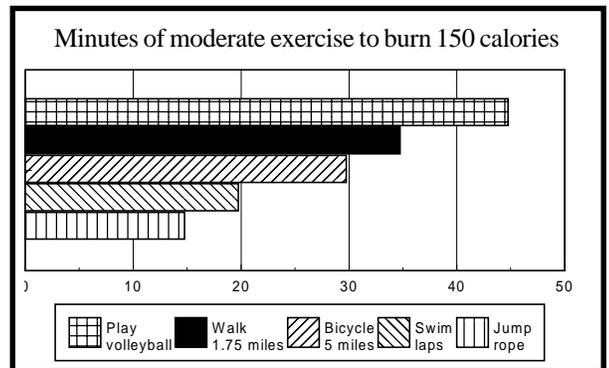
More intense and longer-duration activity can provide additional benefits.

For beginners, moderate physical activity may be easier to maintain than vigorous activity. Also, it may pose less risk of orthopedic and cardiac complications than intense activity. From a public health standpoint, moderate physical activity is more suitable than vigorous activity for general populations.

### How Much is Enough?

Moderate physical activity uses roughly 150 calories per day, or 1,000 calories per week. Activity may be varied from day to day to suit individual needs. The amount of exercise is a function of duration, intensity, and frequency, so the same amount of

activity can be obtained in longer sessions of moderately intense activity as in shorter sessions of more strenuous activity.



Many factors work together to encourage sedentary lifestyles. Social norms, community design, dependence on the automobile, the lure of the couch and television and the explosion of labor-saving devices all contribute to the public health threat of physical inactivity. To combat this threat, strategies to create environments that support physical activity must be developed and implemented.

For more information on physical activity programs in Arkansas contact:

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**Data on adult physical activity are from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, a continuous telephone survey of the adult population in Arkansas supported in part by CDC and administered by the Arkansas Department of Health.**

## Who Benefits from Activity?

**Older Adults**--builds stronger bones, independence.

**Parents**--establishes lifelong habits.

**Dieters**--burns calories and preserves muscle.

**People with High Blood Pressure**--helps lower blood pressure.

**People Anxious, Depressed, or Moody**--improves these states.

**People with Arthritis**--helps control joint swelling and pain.

**The Disabled**-- improves stamina, strength, improves mental well-being and quality of life.

**“Inactive people can improve their health and well-being with moderate, regular activity”**  
--1996 Surgeon General's Report

# Arkansas Index

About 2.5 million people live in Arkansas. Using data we published in Arkansas Vital Statistics, 1996, here's a breakdown on the average number of selected vital events each day.



Based upon 1996 data, the most recent complete data.

## Annual tornado deaths fluctuate wildly

A year ago March, a string of deadly tornadoes flattened homes and killed 24 Arkansans, most of them in Saline County and in Arkadelphia. Then on April 16 this year, two children in Manila (Mississippi County) died when a tornado struck their mobile home.

No other storm inspires the dread of a howling twister. Perhaps it's the suddenness, the arbitrariness with which it destroys.

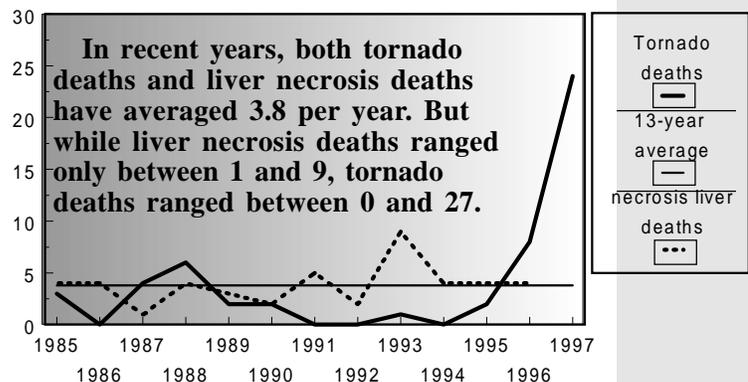
You can pretty well count on a hurricane to stay close to the coast and arrive on schedule with a few days warning, while a tornado can spring from the sky full blown, skipping across the countryside.

These deaths do not include those from injuries indirectly caused by a storm or that occurred after the storm had passed, such as deaths from a fire started by lightning, from driving into a flooded area after a storm, accidents on icy roads or heat or cold exposure, except during a snowstorm.

This brief look at tornado deaths provides an

interesting opportunity to consider the notion of "average" (see the graph below.) In recent years, both tornadoes and liver necrosis have accounted for an average of 3.8 deaths, but most years the liver deaths hovered between three and five, close to the average.

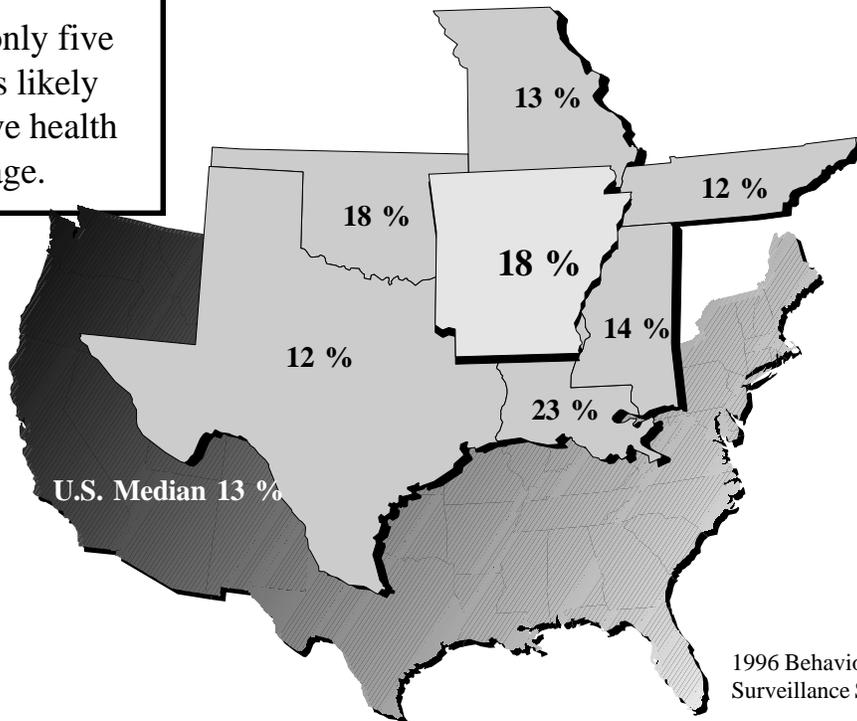
By contrast, only in 1985 and 1987 was the number of annual tornado deaths three, four or five. Further, in five of those years, no one died as the result of a tornado, while in 1997, tornadoes killed 27.



# Arkansas at a Glance

## Percent of adults without health insurance

Adult residents of only five other states were less likely than Arkansans to have health insurance coverage.



1996 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey



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