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Geneva, November 27 (RHC)-- All adults should do a minimum of 150 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week, even more vital for well-being and mental health in the COVID-19 era, the World Health Organization (WHO) says in its first guidance in a decade.

The report recommended that children and adolescents have an average of one hour of daily physical exercise and limit time in front of electronic screens. And people of all ages must compensate for growing sedentary behavior with physical activity to ward off disease and add years to their lives, the WHO said, launching its "Every Move Counts" campaign.

"Increasing physical activity not only helps prevent and manage heart disease, type-2 diabetes and cancer, it also reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, reduces cognitive decline including Alzheimer's and improves memory," Ruediger Krech, WHO director for health promotion, told a news briefing.

Yet one in four adults and a "staggering" four out of five adolescents do not get enough physical activity, which can include walking, cycling, gardening and cleaning, the WHO said. "These guidelines emphasize what many are experiencing during the COVID restrictions that are applied all over the world. And that is that being active every day is good not only for our bodies but also for our mental health," said Fiona Bull, head of WHO's physical activity unit.

Research into the ill-effects of sedentary behavior has grown in the past decade, leading to the new advice, Bull said. Pregnant women and postpartum mothers are now included in the recommendations of 150 to 300 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity per week for adults. This brings health benefits for both the mother and baby, according to Juana Willumsen, a WHO technical officer.

Adults above 65 are advised to add muscle strengthening and activities focusing on balance and coordination to help prevent falls later. Devices worn on the wrist or hip that track physical activity are helpful for all, Bull said.

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