



# Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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## A short measure of physical activity for use in routine general practice

### **Brief update report on the project commissioned by DH from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.**

1. The project aims to produce a measure of physical activity that can be used in routine general practice. It is likely that in the first instance it will be used as part of the new registration process.
2. The primary purpose of the measure should be the simple categorisation of individuals' physical activity for determining the need for recommendations to change behaviour.
3. The criteria for the proposed measure should be:
  - Method of completion should be self explanatory
  - Administration should realistically be self completion
  - Completion time should be <1 minute
  - Individual categorisation of physical activity level should be very simple and involve no computation
  - Coding should allow administrator (nurse) to immediately decide on the need for intervention or not
  - Scoring should allow for comparison with current national physical activity recommendations
  - Instrument should have validity and reliability data
  - Preferably, measure has demonstrated some association with future health outcomes
  - Restricted to adults aged 16-69 years.
4. A review of existing, published questionnaires has been undertaken and a number shortlisted for further consideration. Those shortlisted met the first 3 criteria above. A meeting of relevant experts has taken place to discuss the shortlisted measures. It was felt that a short version of the EPIC physical activity questionnaire could be used as the basis of any final measure. This allowed for physical activity to be assessed in different categories including occupational and sport/recreation. It has some validity and reliability data and will have some health outcome data in the near future. It was felt that additional items should be included to assess:
  - Walking
  - Usual walking pace and possibly frequency of walking at this pace
  - A measure of relative intensity (symptoms associated with physical exertion such as breathing and sweating)
5. Items relating to domestic activities were dismissed as no validity is known to exist and the results of any such questions do not easily lend themselves to an intervention.

6. A draft of a questionnaire will be developed on this basis and views sought from relevant DH and primary care staff before the questionnaire is piloted in the primary care setting. The pilot will examine the face validity of the questionnaire. This will provide information on the acceptability of the questionnaire for primary care staff (mainly practice nurses) and patients.

**Following the pilot a further meeting will be held with relevant policy makers to discuss implementation. The project is due to finish at the end of August 2002.**