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Media Contacts:

Colby Reade, CMD for The Portland Clinic
CReade@CMDAgency.com, 503.488.4209

New Study Finds Portlanders Outpace U.S. Average When it Comes to Healthy Behaviors

Local survey shows Rose City residents more likely to exercise, eat well

Portland, Ore. — A new study conducted by The Portland Clinic shows that local residents are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and live a more health-conscious lifestyle than their peers across the United States.

In fact, the “Portland Healthy Habits: 2016”¹ survey shows about 73 percent of Portland residents surveyed exercise regularly, while only about 56 percent of Americans nationwide work out consistently.

The study sought to understand how Portlanders approach their health and wellness and which healthy lifestyle choices were most popular along the Willamette River. While trends suggest that people across the country are paying closer attention to the way their lifestyle impacts their health² – ditching sugary drinks and cigarettes for



Exercise is the primary way people in Portland manage mental and physical health.

¹ “Portland Healthy Habits: 2016” Riley Research. Spring 2016. Portland, OR.

² Carroll, Linda. “2016: The Year Americans Get Serious About Getting Healthy?” NBC News. 2 Jan. 2016. Web. 27 June 2016.

example – these new numbers show that Portlanders are out in front of the pack, placing more emphasis on nutrition and exercise than those in other cities.

“It’s a point of pride that our residents put such a high emphasis on their physical fitness,” said Amanda Borges, Executive Director, The Medical Society of Metropolitan Portland. “There are a lot of ways that this city is taking a leadership position compared with communities around the country. You can see this in the variety of nutrition-conscious restaurants that are bustling in all corners of our metro area and the vast array of physical activities available in all of our neighborhoods. Prioritizing a diet of healthy options and regular exercise is just one of the many ways we are setting ourselves apart as a region where people want to live.”

This health-conscious lifestyle does more than trim waistlines and increase energy.



Running, hiking, jogging and walking on Portland trails are popular ways to stay in shape in the Rose City.

“Lifestyle choices like exercising regularly and eating a balanced diet can have the single largest impact on our health,” said Dick Clark, CEO, The Portland Clinic. “We’ve seen countless patients benefit from these healthy patterns – either arresting chronic medical issues or maintaining overall health. It speaks volumes about the culture we have cultivated in Portland that our citizens put such an important focus on their health, and our doctors and nurses are proud to help their patients make smart wellness decisions every day.”

Getting Physical

With Portland’s abundance of trails, paths, walkways, sporting leagues and fitness centers, it comes as no surprise that local people love to get out and move. According to

the survey, 73 percent of Portland residents exercise regularly.³ In comparison, only about 56 percent of Americans nationwide work out consistently.⁴

General exercise, such as visiting the gym, was the most popular form of staying fit in the Rose City, with 36 percent of respondents confirming that it is their primary method of staying in shape. Walking came in second with 27 percent. Portland's vast array of natural and alfresco spaces make a variety of other outdoor activities, such as running, jogging, hiking, and bicycling, quite popular for exercise as well.

You Are What You Eat

In addition to exercise, Portlanders are keeping a careful eye on what's on their plate. Aligning with national averages, 54 percent of respondents⁵ confirm that they monitor their nutrition as a means of improving their physical and/or mental health. Similarly, about half of survey respondents dine on fruits and veggies every day, and as many as nine out of ten enjoy produce several times a week. However, recent national statistics show that, even if fruits and veggies are part of our regular diet, we still need to eat more.⁶

Interestingly, there also appears to be some truth to the stereotype that the Northwest is home to a higher number of people who enjoy a meat-free diet. This new study reveals that the Rose City is home to more vegetarians and vegans than the national average. About 6 percent of Portlanders follow a plant-based diet, compared to about 4 percent across the country.⁷ At the same time, Portland's reputation as a caffeine center may be somewhat overblown. Just under half of survey respondents drink some form of

³ "Portland Healthy Habits: 2016" Riley Research. Spring 2016. Portland, OR.

⁴ Riffkin, Rebecca. "So Far in 2015, More Americans Exercising Frequently." Gallup.com. 29 July 2015. Web. 27 June 2016.

⁵ "Survey: Most Americans Are Weight Conscious." Calorie Control Council. 27 Apr. 2011. Web. 27 June 2016.

⁶ Thompson, Dennis. "Only 1 in 10 Americans Eats Enough Fruits and Veggies: CDC." Consumer HealthDay. 9 July 2015. Web. 27 June 2016.

⁷ "Vegetarianism In America." Vegetarian Times. Web. 27 June 2016.

caffeinated beverage every day. In contrast, about two-thirds of all Americans grab a cup of joe to start their day.⁸

Furthermore, Portlanders are not just better about adding in leafy greens. They have a higher tendency to avoid “junk food.” While 80 percent of Americans dine on fast food at least once a month,⁹ only about 60 percent of Portlanders visit these restaurants in a 30-day period. Residents of the Rose City are also unlikely to enjoy processed snacks, with only 35 percent eating junk food multiple times a week.

Room to Improve

Despite the positive data seen in this survey, other statistics show Portland still has room to grow. Just over half (55 percent) of homes report having at least one family member who lives with a chronic health condition, many of which can be treated and prevented with lifestyle changes. Obesity and arthritis (21 percent) were the most common, followed closely by asthma (16 percent) and diabetes (15 percent). Also, just over one-third of survey participants admit to enjoying processed snacks and fast food at least several times a week.

“As much as we think that achieving great health is about spending hours in the gym and dining only on salad, small lifestyle choices can also have a major impact on your wellness,” added Clark. “We think this data does a wonderful job of showing the excellent work Portland has done as a community to foster a more health-conscious environment. We want to encourage our residents to find ways they can improve their own health. Even something as simple as skipping one can of soda or taking a 20-minute walk each afternoon can have a great impact. Doing one health-focused thing a day can result in a world of difference.”

⁸ Saad, Lydia. “Americans’ Coffee Consumption Is Steady, Few Want to Cut Back.” Gallup.com. 29 July 2015. Web. 27 June 2016

⁹ Dugan, Andrew. “Fast Food Still Major Part of U.S. Diet.” Gallup.com. N.p., 6 Aug. 2013. Web. 27 June 2016.

About The Portland Clinic

Established in 1921, The Portland Clinic is Oregon's oldest, private, multispecialty medical group. Today, with sophisticated medical technology, modern spacious facilities and dynamic medical specialists, a personal approach to each patient's good health remains The Portland Clinic's primary focus. The Portland Clinic's six locations serve the greater Portland metropolitan area and care for over 90,000 patients each year throughout the Northwest. For more information visit www.theportlandclinic.com and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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