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## THE IMPACT OF MAJOR LIFE EVENTS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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**Introduction:** Regular physical activity (PA) can prevent and manage chronic diseases yet physical inactivity remains a global public health concern. Determinants of PA are complex and vary between men and women. Specifically, the impact of intrapersonal factors such as how major life events impact PA behavior is less understood. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effects of life events on adults' PA levels.

**Methods:** Nationally representative panel data from the Americans' changing lives survey (1986-2012) were used to analyze the impact of major life events on age-based trajectories of PA separately for men and women using latent growth curve models.

**Results:** Among women, death of a parent or retiring was associated with greater PA at baseline. When examining across time among women, experiencing death of a parent or close friend, entering into marriage, or moving were all associated with

greater PA while entering in to retirement was associated with less PA as women aged. Among men, becoming a caregiver was associated with greater PA at baseline, and experiencing death of a close friend or entering into marriage were associated with more PA as men aged.

**Discussion:** Findings of this study suggest that major life events do affect PA behaviors at varying levels for men and women. Considering the impact of life events is important in planning effective health promotion interventions to increase PA, and it appears to be important to consider these impacts separately for men and women.

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