

# A+ CALIFORNIA TEACHERS STUDY Report Card

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Sue Ten Eyck

"I'm 35 years old and some of my colleagues still call me 'kid'," laughs Sue Ten Eyck, a ten-year veteran middle school teacher at Royal Oak Intermediate School in Covina, California. "You see, I was a student at this school and they were my teachers."

Sue graduated from college with a degree in athletic training, only to discover that virtually no jobs were available in her field. She began substitute teaching and found interacting with both students and teachers to be so rewarding and enjoyable that she went back to college and obtained her credential. Her attitude is infectious: her husband, Mark, has also returned to school to achieve his goal of becoming an elementary school teacher.

In addition to providing a good education, Sue welcomes being in a position of a positive role model. "I value being a supportive person in a kid's life. I hope I have made a lasting positive impression. I take it as a compliment when students accidentally call me 'Mom'."

Sue is another example of a teacher committed to making breast cancer research possible. She has been a California Teachers Study member since the study began in 1995. "I remember when I received the first questionnaire. I thought: 'This sounds interesting'. It was voluntary and I didn't feel like my privacy would be invaded. I have to admit, though, I put off filling it out until I had received several reminders."

"No one in my immediate family has had cancer. But I am concerned because I have read statistics that something like one in two men and one in three women will develop cancer. I like the idea of a study that focuses on teachers and the incidence of cancer. I would encourage others to participate, as well. Why would they not?"

## COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA TEACHERS STUDY

**Q: How did you get my name and address?**

**A:** You sent them to us. In 1995 the State Teachers Retirement System mailed you our letter inviting your participation. If you wished to be included in the study, you simply filled out the enclosed questionnaire and sent it to the California Teachers Study - which you did. Of course, all information you provide is kept strictly confidential.

**Q: What is the goal of the study?**

**A:** The most important goal is to learn more about the causes and prevention of breast cancer. We will be able to compare the experiences and exposures of women who develop breast cancer to those who do not and look for consistent differences that may be associated with risk of cancer. The study will also provide important new information about other types of cancer and other diseases.

**Q: Who is included in the study?**

**A:** In 1995, members of the California State Teachers Retirement System were invited to participate. This

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## HAVE YOU MOVED?

**SAVE THIS CARD!** The California Teachers Study is a long-term research project. To assure that you receive future newsletters containing study updates, please save this postcard and return it to us if your name or address changes. Thank you!

**NEW ADDRESS:**

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Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

# CAN EXERCISE PREVENT BREAST CANCER?

**AN INTRIGUING QUESTION** has arisen among cancer researchers. Might physical exercise reduce the risk of breast cancer? With breast cancer remaining the most common cancer type among women, the possibility is enticing. Exercise is known to be beneficial in directly reducing the risk of heart attacks, other cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and colon cancer. Diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, and cancers of the kidney and endometrium also may be reduced with increased exercise by controlling weight. Furthermore, exercise is free, doesn't cause other diseases and can be done almost anywhere at anytime.

**DURING THE FIRST SURVEY** of the California Teachers Study, you provided information on your exercise activities at various times during your life. You indicated the average amount of time you spent each week in strenuous

exercise activities like aerobics, calisthenics, running, or cycling on hills and in moderate exercise activities like brisk walking, volleyball, tennis, or cycling on level streets. You answered these questions for up to six periods of your life.

**DR. LESLIE BERNSTEIN**, a Teachers Study researcher with a long-standing interest in the effects of exercise on women's health, has begun to look at the exercise patterns you reported. The figures separate the responses of women under age 50 years at the time of the survey from those who were aged 50 years or older and provide information on strenuous as well as moderate intensity activities. Your information should provide the clearest evidence to date on the relationship between physical exercise and breast cancer. ❖

## High School

We asked you to describe your physical activity during three times of your life: during high school, at ages 18-24 and during the past three years. Not surprisingly, teachers report the greatest amount of physical activity was during high school. About one-third reported that they had four or more hours of exercise weekly. Little difference was seen in the amount of **MODERATE EXERCISE** in high school for teachers now over 50 years of age as opposed to under 50 (Fig. 1). However, for **STRENUOUS EXERCISE** in the high school years, the younger teachers reported more hours per week (Fig. 2).

## Ages 18-24

The exercise patterns during young adulthood were very similar to the high school years. Little difference was noted in the amount of **MODERATE EXERCISE** between the two age groups (Fig. 3), but considerably more of the younger teachers reported **STRENUOUS EXERCISE** during these ages (Fig. 4). It is interesting to compare Figure 2 with Figure 4; the overall decline in exercise with passing years is already apparent, just after high school.

## Past Three Years

Of course, our question about exercise during the past three years will represent a wide range of ages. However, for most teachers, this is well after the age 18-24 period. Here we observe an unexpected pattern. The teachers over 50 years of age are twice as likely to engage in **MODERATE EXERCISE** four or more hours per week than are their younger colleagues (Fig. 5). The amount of **STRENUOUS EXERCISE** during the past three years is not different between the two age groups (Fig. 6).



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# EXERCISE THROUGH THE YEARS

FIGURE 1

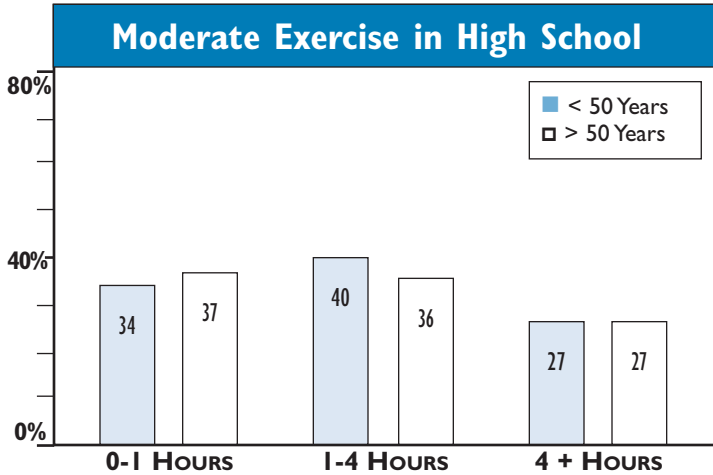


FIGURE 2

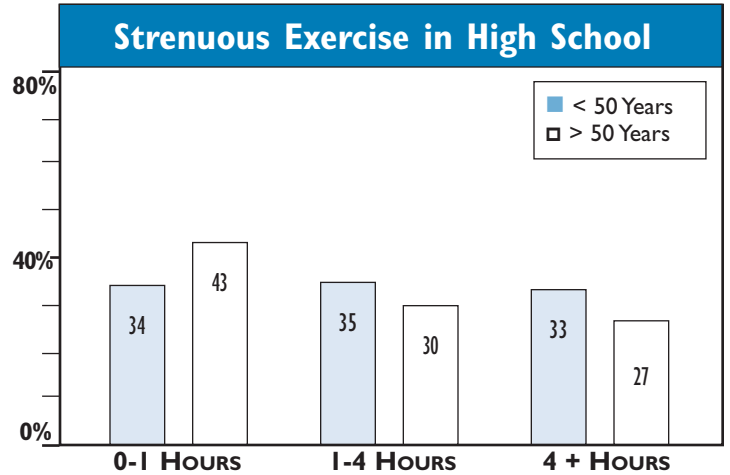


FIGURE 3

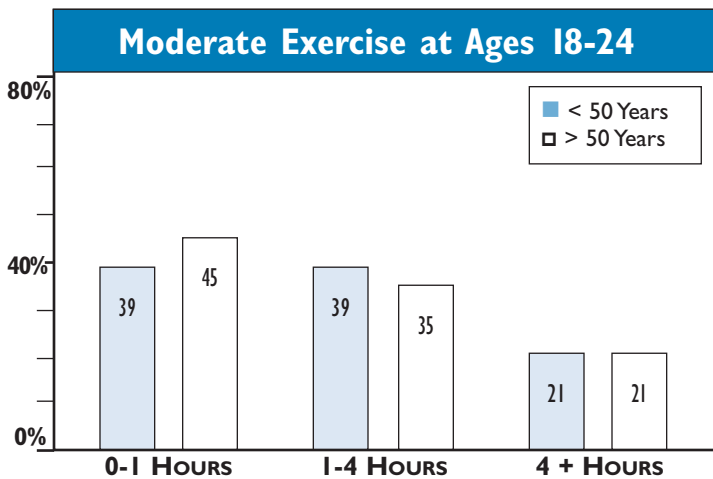


FIGURE 4

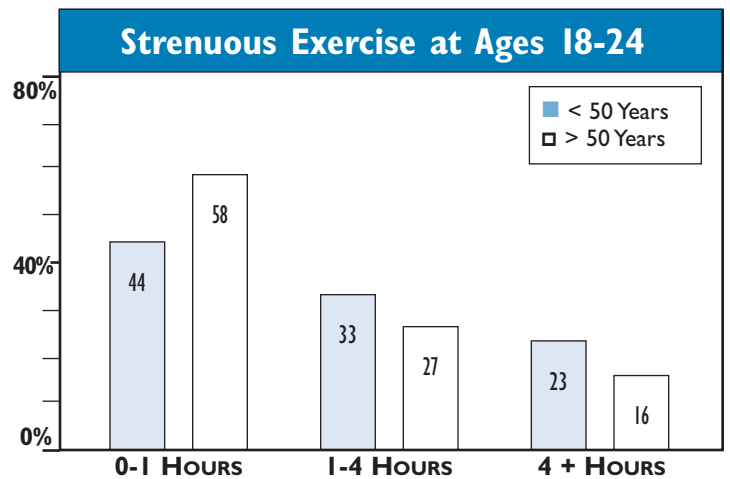


FIGURE 5

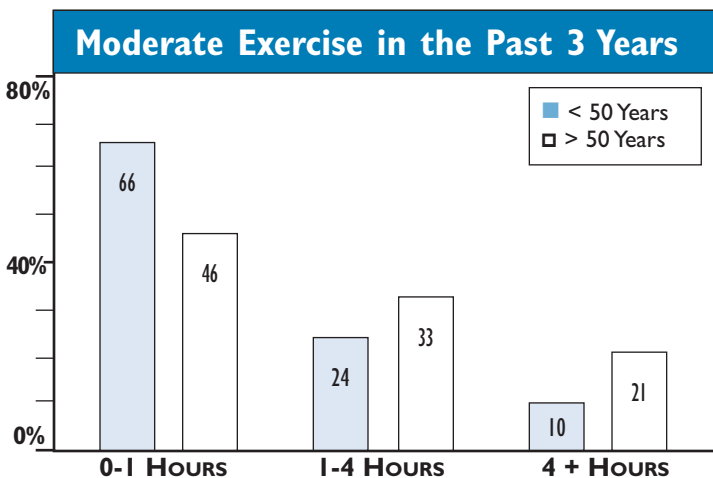
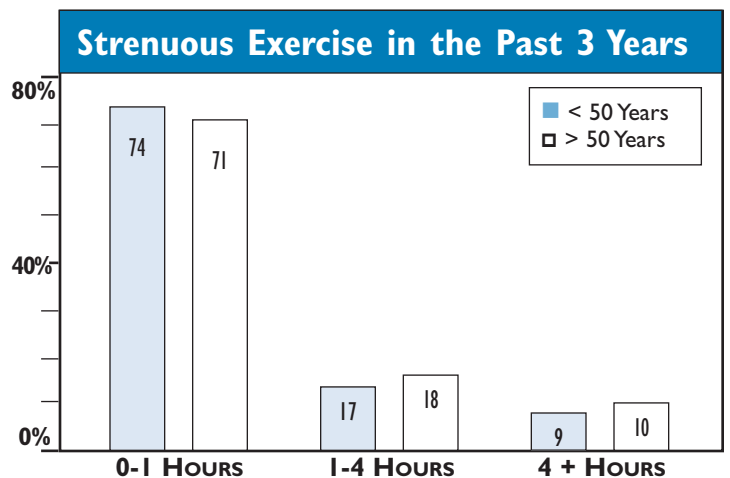


FIGURE 6



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## Common Questions About the California Teachers Study

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includes public school teachers, administrators and some other public school employees.

### **Q: Why conduct a study of teachers?**

**A:** We wish to conduct a very large study, one that will help reveal causes of breast cancer not previously understood. One way to do that efficiently is by collecting information through the mail. Teachers are well-educated and thus more capable of providing the information through the mail than many other segments of the general population. Also, teachers tend to stay in the education profession, which makes it easier to include them in a study that spans many years. Furthermore, questions have been raised as to whether teachers experience slightly more breast cancer than others. If this is true, it is important to understand why.

### **Q: Why do you want to include me? I don't have breast cancer.**

**A:** We must include many teachers without breast cancer. In this study, we will compare the experiences and exposures of women without breast cancer to those who have experienced it and look for consistent differences that may be associated with risk of cancer.

### **Q: Why do you want to include me? I already had breast cancer.**

**A:** Your experiences are the key to this study; without you, there is no study. By sharing your knowledge and history, you may benefit all women in helping to learn more about the causes and prevention of cancer.

### **Q: Why do you want to include me? I'm not a teacher anymore.**

**A:** Retired and former teachers are just as helpful as current teachers. The benefit of their experience will help identify causes of cancer and other health problems.

### **Q: How long will the study continue?**

**A:** Every two years, in the fall, we send a brief questionnaire to each participant to update her information. Each time adds valuable new information because it allows us to compare more of the life experiences of teachers without breast cancer to those who have experienced it. The National Cancer Institute is providing financial support to continue this important project for several more years. ❖

## NEED TO CONTACT US?

Call toll-free at **(800) 568-9471**

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