



National Walk to Work Day Friday 2 October 2009 Better Health, Cleaner Air

FACTS & FIGURES ABOUT WALKING

About National Walk to Work Day

National Walk to Work Day is an annual event being held on **Friday, 2 October 2009** involving businesses - big and small. Now in its 7th year as a national initiative, Walk to Work Day encourages regular walking to improve health and contribute to a cleaner environment.

This year, we are challenging Australia's employers to register as WTWD Corporate Ambassadors;

- To promote regular walking as a healthy activity (better physical, mental & social health);
- To reduce reliance on the private motor vehicle (reduce car-dependency);
- To promote and improve the use of public transport (less traffic); and
- To improve air quality by reducing unnecessary vehicle emissions (help tackle climate change and reduce global warming).

Individuals can also pledge their willingness to walk by registering as a Walking Class Hero at www.walk.com.au.

Walking helps with productivity at Work

Moderate physical activity including walking (even 15 minutes before and after work each day) can significantly enhance well-being, productivity and reduce absenteeism.

There is overwhelming evidence that physical inactivity increases all causes of mortality, doubles the risk of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, and obesity and increases the risks of certain cancers, high blood pressure, lipid disorders, osteoporosis, depression and anxiety.

- More than half (54%) of Australian adults are either overweight or obese. It is estimated; about 75% of the Australian population will be overweight or obese by 2020. *(2004-05 National Health Survey, ABS)*
- In 2005, Access Economics estimated the economic costs of obesity at \$3.767 billion. This includes productivity and health system costs.
- 7.4 million Australian aged 18 years and over were overweight in 2004-05, with over 30% of those being obese. 62% of men were overweight or obese compared with 45% of women. *(2004-05 National Health Survey, ABS).*
- A recent study found health-related losses in productivity in the workplace average 4.2% for workers with moderate to severe obesity, 1.8% higher than for other employees. The cost of this lower performance could reach thousands of dollars per year for every obese employee, leading to calls for more workplace programs targeting weight loss. *(J Occup Environ Med 2007;49:1317-1324 (Cawley J, et al)*
- Australia spent one in every 11 dollars on health in 2005-06, equalling \$86.9 billion or 9.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) – 45% more per person in 2005-06 than a decade before. *(Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's 2008 national report card on health, Chapter 8, page 396 – 402)*

FOR MORE INFO & TO REGISTER VISIT WWW.WALK.COM.AU

Unblock some arteries – health benefits of walking

- Walking lowers our risk of heart disease, providing important protection against coronary artery disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- It also helps with lower back pain, improves muscular and bone strength, helps maintain flexibility, coordination and a healthy weight and cuts the risk of infection and hypertension.
- Walking helps with mental health by increasing the levels of ‘mood lifting’ chemicals in the brain, providing a distraction from daily worries and increasing social contact if exercising with other people.
- We also know that some 47 per cent of people with cardiac problems show symptoms of depression and that depression is as much a risk factor as smoking, poor diet or lack of exercise. Regular physical activity leads to a 17-28% reduced risk of developing depression in men (*beyondblue*)
- Researchers have found those who walk regularly are 24% less likely to develop dementia. (*Neurology 2007;doi:10.1212/01.wnl.0000296276.50595.86 (Ravaglia G, et al)*)
- Physical activity regulates hormones such as insulin and estrogen levels and affects the speed by
- which food passes through the bowel, reducing the chance of cancer by around 25%.
- Physical activity helps insulin to work better for people with Type 1 Diabetes and it may help their overall diabetes management by lowering blood glucose levels as muscles use more energy.
- Walking to work cuts pollution levels which are known to cause respiratory tract irritation and infection, allergies, bronchitis, eye irritation, asthma requiring hospital admission and lung cancer.

Relieve the Congestion – environment benefits of walking

- Air pollution, such as smog, kills about 4,000 Australians every year - more than the number of people killed in road crashes annually.
- The transport sector, including cars, is already responsible for 16% of greenhouse emissions in
- Australia and is increasing at a faster rate than those from any other sector.
- The average Australian family car travels 15,000km a year generating about 5 tonnes of greenhouse pollution and costing its owners about \$13,000.
- Each kilometre we don't drive saves up to half a kilogram of greenhouse gas and 20 cents in operating costs.
- Almost 40% of Australia's population is exposed to undesirable levels of traffic noise and a further 10% is exposed to excessive levels on a daily basis.

Shrink your carbon footprint and take a first step towards a more physically active lifestyle by participating in National Walk to Work Day - Friday October 2, 2009.

- Walking is a fun and relatively easy exercise which is environmentally sustainable and provides savings in both petrol and health care costs.
- It is a great way for adults to incorporate regular physical activity into a busy schedule, which research shows, is necessary for vitality and both mental and physical well being.
- Walking to work with friends or colleagues can be a way of sharing valuable social time, or walking by yourself may provide more time to gather your thoughts for the day.
- Walking to work can help remove cars from the road, reducing greenhouse emissions, cutting traffic congestion and reducing safety risks.

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Sponsored by the Australian Government and supported by all State, Territory and Local Governments and

