



Friday 6 September

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW RESEARCH DISCOVERS WHY ADULTS LIKE WALKING TO WORK

“By the time I'm home, I'm not stressed anymore”

3 September 2024: In the lead up to National Walk to Work Day this Friday, a new Australian study has found that improved mental health, predictability of travel time, and substantial financial savings are some of the biggest motivators for people walking to work.

Researcher Dr Anthony L Walsh, from Deakin University's Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN) said:

“Active commuting has been gaining popularity as a way to increase daily physical activity, and I wanted my study to focus on the reasons why office workers walked to work, rather than on the barriers that stop them doing it.

Given that only 22% of adult Australians currently meet physical guidelines, I wanted this research to uncover why office workers walked to and from work so that these triggers could be used to further promote the benefits of active commuting to engage other workers to do the same,” he said.

Vice President of the Asia-Pacific Society for Physical Activity, Professor David Dunstan agreed saying there is a huge opportunity for growth.

“Given that the average adult sits for 9 hours each day, it is important to find triggers that encourage people to build more activity into their day-to-day routines. Active transport, including walking, cycling and taking public transport to and from work provides the opportunity for working adults to accumulate more movement into their day.

With just under 50 per cent of Australian adults now estimated to be working from home at least one day a week, opportunities for active commuting have further declined. This places an even greater importance on stepping away from the computer at home to break up those long sitting periods,” Professor Dunstan said.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, among adults who did not meet the current recommended physical activity levels in 2022:

- 1 in 4 adults aged under 65 were completely physically inactive in the past week
- More women than men were physically inactive
- Nearly half of employed adults described their day at work as mostly sitting

“We know that making small changes to daily routines to incorporate more movement can make a big difference for physical and mental health. Having more insight around what triggers people to make the switch is valuable information for employees and employers wishing to create a healthier workplace,” Professor Dunstan said.

Being more active can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease, reduce the risk of some cancers, maintain or improve blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, maintain strong muscles and bones and help develop and maintain physical and mental wellbeing.

“For those who do walk to work, it is often the most habitual trip they take and is an incredibly important part of their day. Yes, it provides physical health benefits along with some of these new findings, however most people said the mental health benefits were the most profound, with comments like: *‘It’s the only time in my day I get to think and plan, If you stop walking - you notice the difference’* and *‘By the time I’m home, I’m not stressed anymore,’*” Dr Walsh said.

“Walking or cycling to work lets you get your daily physical activity in a time efficient way - it’s like you’re getting two uses out of your commuting time.” Dr Walsh said.

He went on to say that initiatives like National Walk to Work Day are a great reminder to be more active, not just on Walk to Work Day, but every day.

“Whatever your reason, it is clear that there are so many benefits to daily activity and I hope this research is used to inspire more people to use active commuting in their day-to-day routine,” he said.

Pedestrian Council of Australia CEO Harold Scruby agreed, saying:

“People who walk before, during or after work are generally healthier, more productive, and creative, and are less likely to be absent or take sick leave. I encourage everyone to step into spring and walk with us on Walk to Work Day to raise awareness of how simple it is to build walking into your daily routine.”

National Walk to Work Day started in 1999. This year it’s on Friday 6 September. It is an initiative of the Pedestrian Council of Australia, to walk more at the beginning, middle and end of the day - and not just on Walk to Work Day - but every day.

For more information, please visit walk.com.au

ENDs

FACT SHEET

For media information and interviews contact:

- Walk to Work Day Media Contact: Gabrielle Leonello 0425 554 454 or gabrielle@littlelion.com.au

Interviews

- Dr Anthony L Walsh, Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University – 0428 992 767
- Professor David Dunstan, Vice President of the Asia-Pacific Society for Physical Activity, Baker-Deakin Department of Lifestyle and Diabetes – 0400 989 996
- Harold Scruby, CEO, Pedestrian Council of Australia – 0418 110 011

Research links

- “By the time I'm home, I'm not stressed anymore”: A qualitative exploration of enablers of active commuting among office workers -
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214140524000872?via%3Dihub>
- <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/changing-patterns-of-work>

Regular walking can help:

- Reduce the risk of, or help manage [blood sugar levels and type 2 diabetes](#)
- Maintain or improve [blood pressure](#), [cholesterol](#), and reduce [cardiovascular disease](#)
- Reduce the risk of some [cancers](#)
- Prevent unhealthy weight gain and help with weight loss
- Maintain strong muscles and bones
- [Develop and maintain physical and mental wellbeing](#)
- Create opportunities for socialising and meeting people

It's easy to get involved:

- If you can't walk all the way, use public transport and get off the bus, train, tram or ferry a few stops earlier and walk the rest of the way to work
- If you do need to drive, leave the car a kilometre or two from your destination and walk the rest of the way
- Take a half-hour walk at lunchtime
- Where possible use the stairs rather than escalators or the lift
- If you sit at a desk, be sure to get up and walk around at least once every hour
- Get up and talk to your colleagues instead of sending them emails or texts
- If working from home, make sure you take a break and walk regularly throughout the day
- Rather than holding meetings around a table or online, ‘host’ a ‘walking workshop’
- Challenge your work mates and compare your steps