



**LET'S
GET
MOVING!**

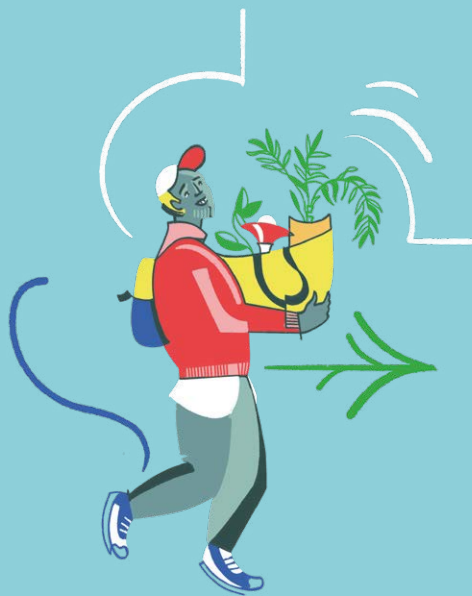
100 REASONS TO CYCLE AND WALK MORE



THE PEP

Transport, Health
and Environment
Pan-European Programme





LET'S GET MOVING!

100 reasons to walk and cycle more

Walking and cycling are much more than just ways to get around – they can be life-changing! From boosting our mood and strengthening our body to protecting the environment and enhancing community well-being and the local economy, walking and cycling offer countless benefits.

Join us as we explore **100 compelling reasons** to make walking and cycling a part of our daily routine and their promotion a key objective for health, transport, environment and urban planning professionals and policy-makers. These reasons are backed by the latest scientific evidence, complemented by personal experiences from people across the WHO European Region.

Let's get moving! And let's support changes that make walking and cycling easier and safer for everyone – creating a sustainable positive impact on our health, our communities and the world around us for this and the generations to come.



WHY WALK AND CYCLE MORE? BECAUSE IT'S GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH



HOW WALKING AND CYCLING BENEFIT PHYSICAL HEALTH

1. Using walking and cycling as a means of transport makes it easy to integrate exercise into daily routines and follow WHO guidelines on physical activity:
2. Regular walking and cycling strengthen muscles, improves balance and helps to maintain good posture.
3. Walking and cycling can promote better sleep.
4. Walking and cycling can improve joint mobility and reduce arthritis symptoms.
5. Engaging in regular cycling and walking boosts the immune system and makes us less prone to common colds.
6. Walking and cycling help to maintain a healthy body weight.
7. Physical activity gained from walking and cycling also enhances digestive health.
8. Walking and cycling enhance cardiovascular fitness, reducing the risk of heart disease.
9. Walking for 30 minutes or cycling for 20 minutes most days reduces total mortality risk for adults by at least 10% across the population (1) and adds more healthy years to peoples' lives.
10. Regular walking and cycling reduce the risk of developing type-2 diabetes by about 30% across the population (2).
11. For those who already have type-2 diabetes, walking and cycling reduce the progression of disease and related mortality risk.
12. Regular walking or cycling reduce the likelihood of death from cancer across the population by about a third (2).
13. For cancer survivors, walking and cycling improve survival rates and reduce the risk of recurrence.
14. We can enjoy a healthier life through walking and cycling with fewer doctor visits and costs for medical care.

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15. Walking and cycling can offer a gentle form of exercise, ideal for those recovering from illness, including people with disabilities.
16. In older adults, regular walking and cycling help maintain balance and coordination, contributing to reducing falls.
17. Walking and cycling provide prolonged independence in older age through maintaining mobility and strength, and less or later need for assistance.
18. Regular walking enhances bone density, reducing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures, as well as strength and agility, thus maintaining overall functional ability.
19. For pregnant women, walking and cycling as regular moderate-intensity physical activity decreases the risk of gestational hypertension and gestational diabetes.
20. Walking and cycling also reduce risks for delivery- and newborn-related complications.
21. During increased infection risk or pandemics, walking and cycling offer a safe and effective way to maintain a physical distance from crowded spaces.

“Walking is a man’s
best medicine.”

Hippocrates, Ancient Greek physician

“Think of bicycles as
rideable art that can just
about save the world.”

Grant Petersen, American bicycle designer



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HOW WALKING AND CYCLING BENEFIT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- 22. Walking and cycling boost mental health, improve mood and help reduce anxiety and depression.
- 23. Regular walking and cycling improve our quality of life.
- 24. Studies show that taking just 4000 steps per day reduces the risk of dementia by 25%, while taking 10 000 steps reduces the risk by 50% (3).
- 25. Walking and cycling benefit those with cognitive disorders, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- 26. Regular walking and cycling decrease the risk of postpartum depression and help in managing it.
- 27. Walking and cycling can give a sense of accomplishment and boost self-esteem through physical achievements like completing longer walks or rides.
- 28. Regular walking and cycling help build an exercise routine for all people, including those with disabilities.
- 29. Walking and cycling in safe environments foster a sense of independence, especially in children and young adults.
- 30. For children, walking and cycling also encourage problem-solving and navigation skills, and inspire curiosity and learning.
- 31. Regular physical activity (such as walking or cycling) increases children cognitive abilities.



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BEYOND HEALTH: ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF WALKING AND CYCLING

32. Walking and cycling can help get somewhere more reliably and often even faster, particularly in traffic-congested cities.
33. Walking and cycling are a fun family activity for both kids and adults.
34. Walking and cycling can help to meet and connect with new people, fostering a sense of community and belonging.
35. Walking and cycling also encourage a less hectic pace of life.
36. Unlike the common challenges of finding parking for cars, arriving by bike or on foot typically offers fewer difficulties.
37. Walking and cycling make us independent of delays and disruptions in other forms of transport.
38. Walking and cycling also provide low-cost, high-reward forms transportation options as well as recreation for people of all ages, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds.
39. Choosing to walk and cycle allows us to discover new places and hidden gems, even in our own neighbourhoods.
40. Walking together provides opportunities to connect with friends and family and even facilitates interpersonal conflict resolution.
41. Combining walking and cycling with public transport gives greater flexibility and reach.
42. A pair of comfortable shoes and a bicycle provide simple means to reconnect with nature.
43. Walking and cycling help to foster intergenerational relationships through shared activities.
44. Creative thinking and the generation of new ideas can be enhanced by choosing to walk and cycle more.
45. Walking and cycling can become fun hobbies in themselves.
46. Walking and cycling can also lead you to discover other pursuits like bird watching, photography, sketching or nature journaling.

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WHY WALK AND CYCLE MORE? BECAUSE IT'S GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

- 47. Switching from motorized transport to walking and cycling contributes to decreasing urban air pollution.
- 48. Unlike combustion engine vehicles, walking and cycling produce little to no noise, leading to a quieter urban environment.
- 49. Choosing to walk or cycle instead of driving, reduces carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and helps us mitigate climate change.
- 50. Switching to walking and cycling can reduce car use, which in turn allows for fewer spaces dedicated to cars and creates more room for parks, green spaces and biodiversity.
- 51. Pavements and cycle paths occupy less space than roads and large parking places, which reduces the amount of heat-absorbing surfaces, helping to lower urban temperatures.
- 52. Choosing to walk or cycle reduces water and soil contamination caused by pollutants that accumulate on road surfaces.
- 53. Having fewer cars fosters more sustainable cities and more attractive cityscapes.
- 54. Committing to walking and cycling can inspire others to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours and habits.
- 55. Walking and cycling are highly energy-efficient modes of transport as they rely on human power rather than polluting energy sources.
- 56. Cycling offers an eco-friendly alternative for last-mile delivery services.
- 57. Walking and cycling reduce the demand for fossil fuels and other forms of energy, contributing to the conservation of limited non-renewable resources and to transitioning towards clean, sustainable energy.
- 58. If we switched from using a car to a bike for just one trip per day, we could reduce our carbon emissions by 0.5 tonnes a year (4).
- 59. Based on a study in seven European cities with almost 4000 participants, switching from car to bike for one regular trip per day decreases carbon dioxide emissions from transport by over 80% (4).

- 60. The same study found that the average person who shifted from car to bike for just one day a week cut their carbon emissions by 3.2 kg of CO₂ – equivalent to the emissions from driving a car for 10 km or sending 800 emails (5).
- 61. When comparing the life cycle of travel modes (taking into account the carbon generated by making, fueling and disposing of the vehicle), emissions per trip from cycling can be more than 30 times lower than driving a fossil fuel car, and about ten times lower than driving an electric one (5). Thus, cycling is 10 times more important than electric cars for reducing the carbon emissions of cities.
- 62. When walking and cycling paths are integrated into green and around blue spaces, they contribute to related mental and physical health and well-being benefits.

“As a kid I had a dream – I wanted to own my own bicycle. When I got the bike I must have been the happiest boy in Liverpool, maybe the world. I lived for that bike. Most kids left their bike in the backyard at night. Not me. I insisted on taking mine indoors and the first night I even kept it in my bed.”

John Lennon, British musician



HOW DOES WALKING AND CYCLING MORE STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITIES?

Walking and cycling more contributes to social and community well-being and inclusion by:

- 63.** creating healthier communities and reducing the burden on health and social systems;
- 64.** freeing up more space for community activities, such as outdoor physical activity or farmers' markets;
- 65.** encouraging public use of streets and places and boosting street performances and outdoor events;
- 66.** strengthening social cohesion of communities, benefiting all parts of society;
- 67.** offering new friendships and social connections through joining related-group activities;
- 68.** enhancing gender and social equality by making mobility accessible to everyone;
- 69.** increasing civic engagement by encouraging people to explore their communities;
- 70.** saving space, which is essential as cities grow and space becomes more limited;
- 71.** requiring less expensive infrastructure, which lasts longer compared to that for motor vehicles; and
- 72.** being more resilient, offering viable transport alternatives during pandemics, fuel shortages, natural disasters or security threats.

“Those who wish to control their own lives and move beyond existence as mere clients and consumers – those people ride a bike.”

Wolfgang Sachs, German author and academic

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WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF EMBRACING WALKING AND CYCLING?

- 73. The health benefits of walking and cycling translate into substantial cost savings for health-care systems: studies found benefit–cost ratios of investing into walking and cycling versus health-care cost savings of up to 8:1 (6).
- 74. Pedestrians and cyclists are more regular customers for small businesses, thus over time spending more money than drivers. They are also more likely to support local businesses (7,8).
- 75. Walking and cycling lead to lower absenteeism from work due to overall better health and better immune functions.
- 76. Walking and cycling may also enhance job performance by improving brain function, helping to manage stress and allowing people to arrive at work more awake and ready for the workday.
- 77. Increased cycling can also foster green job opportunities, such as in cycle repair shops and managing the logistics of cycling rental schemes.
- 78. Increased cycling demand boosts the bike economy by fostering investments into bike shops, rentals and services, cycling infrastructure and other business opportunities for active mobility.
- 79. Well-developed walking and cycling infrastructure can enhance the value of nearby real estate.
- 80. Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly cities attract a young, highly-educated workforce and innovative businesses.
- 81. Cities designed for walking and cycling can attract tourists looking for eco-friendly and sustainable travel options.
- 82. Cycling and hiking tourism bring positive economic, ecological and social benefits for the sustainable development of local economies and eco-tourism.



HOW DOES WALKING AND CYCLING MORE CONTRIBUTE TO SAFER STREETS FOR ALL?

- 83. By prioritizing walking and cycling, cities are more likely to implement infrastructure that promotes road safety, such as dedicated bike lanes, pedestrian crossings and lower speed limits in areas with high pedestrian and cyclist traffic.
- 84. Increased walking and cycling contributes to increasing the use of public spaces and roads by pedestrians and cyclists, and thus leads to safer communities through the number of eyes on the streets.
- 85. An increased pedestrian and cyclist presence increases their perception by drivers, leading to more considerate driving behaviour and creating a safer environment for drivers, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.
- 86. Choosing to walk or cycle instead of driving contributes to a decrease in motorized traffic volume, which in turn can contribute to reducing the risk of accidents and collisions.
- 87. Putting a policy focus on the promotion of walking and cycling fosters investments into safe infrastructure such as pedestrian crossings, footpaths and segregated bike lanes, and the introduction of reduced-speed zones, which increases safety for all road users.



“One of the most important days of my life was when I learned to ride a bicycle.”

Henry David Thoreau, American naturalist and philosopher

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AND FINALLY: WHAT DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT WALKING AND CYCLING?

We asked people across the WHO European Region why they love walking and cycling. Here's what they said:

Walking and cycling...

- 98. make me feel alive;
- 99. are really, really fun;
- 90. connect me with myself and with others;
- 91. clear my thoughts and fill my heart and soul;
- 92. awaken my senses and sharpen my mind;
- 93. are like a therapy without a therapist;
- 94. strengthen my will and fuel my passion;
- 95. are the most flexible, convenient and independent way to get around in the city;
- 96. make me feel stylish and fashionable;
- 97. help me have better ideas and find solutions to a problem;
- 98. mean I can move with my own power and rely on nothing else;
- 99. help me control my weight without dieting; and
- 100. help me leave behind work after a long day and arrive home free of stress and lingering thoughts.



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**For our health and mental well-being, for
the environment, for our communities, for
the economy and for road safety for all:
there are more than enough reasons to walk
and cycle more!**



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**“I’ve always been
better moving than I
am standing still.”**

Neil Young, Canadian musician



**“Only where you have
been on foot have you
really been.”**

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German writer

To learn more about how WHO and the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) are advancing efforts to promote walking and cycling across the region, we invite you to explore the Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion (9) and the Pan-European Master Plan for Walking (10). These comprehensive frameworks are designed to support national authorities in the transport, health and environment sectors in taking strategic action to foster active mobility and create healthier, more sustainable communities.

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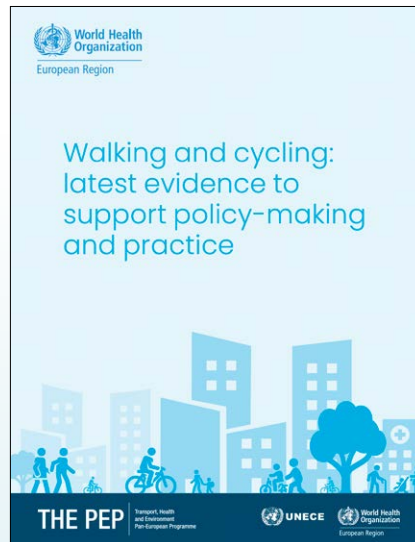
¹ All references were accessed 20 April 2025.



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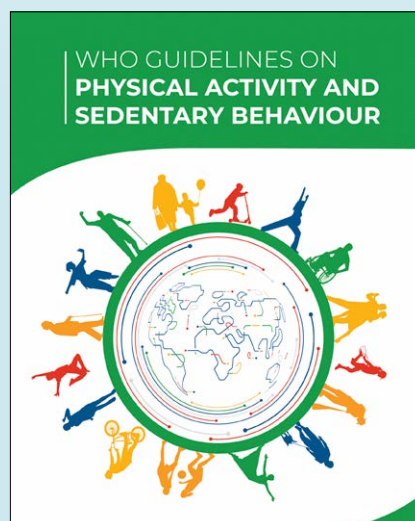
ESSENTIAL READING:

Walking and cycling: latest evidence to support policy-making and practice



<https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289057882>

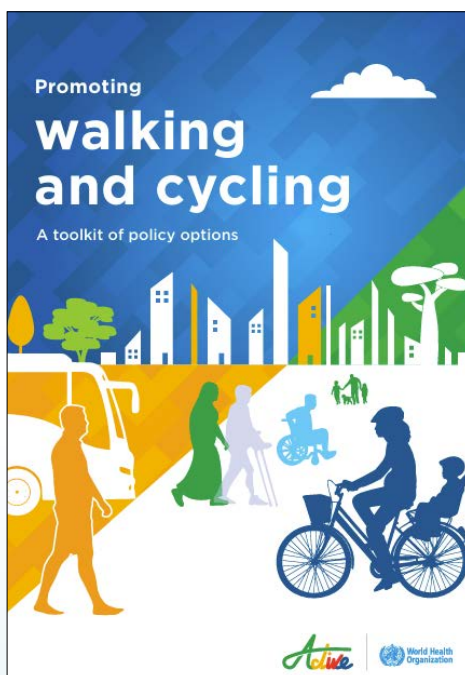
WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour



<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240015128>

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Promoting walking and cycling: a toolkit of policy options



<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240109902>

Pan-European Master Plan for Cycling Promotion



<https://unece.org/info/THE-PEP/pub/376488>

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Pan-European Master Plan on Walking



<https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/397453>

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