

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

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Oh no! - not obesity again!

HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

WHO Definition of health:

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"

Some definitions of health also include the concept of empowerment.

Transport is both health promoting and health damaging

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"The worst thing that anyone can do for their health, in terms of travel, is to make no travel choices, but simply to get in a car outside their home and use it for all journeys"

Pam Ashton, July 2004.

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How travel mode affects health

1. Physical activity
2. Mental health
3. "Accidents" (crashes)
4. Air quality (respiratory and heart disease)
5. Congestion and economic effects
6. Climate change

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It promotes health by giving access to health promoting facilities such as leisure centres, the countryside, healthy food and healthcare -

7% of people without cars say they have missed, turned down, or chosen not to seek medical help over the last 12 months because of transport problems.

Lack of access to transport is experienced disproportionately by older people and people from low income groups, especially those living in rural areas. This lack of access to transport means, in effect, lack of access to health promoting opportunities such as exercise, healthy food and health services. Acheson recommended subsidized fares for pensioners and low-income groups throughout the country.

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It damages health - through motor vehicle emissions, crashes, production of greenhouse gases leading to climate change, severance of communities, car dependency leading to inactivity and stress resulting from congestion and aggression

Whilst most transport modes do the above it is possible to choose active travel and promote the health of yourself, your family and the planet!

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Physical Activity

Coronary heart disease is among the biggest killers in this country. More than 1.4 million suffer from angina. 300,000 have heart attack every year. More than 110,000 die of heart problems in England every year. But the effects of heart disease are unequal: among unskilled men the death rate is almost three times higher than it is among professionals.

The NSF for CHD says that by April 2002 health organisations will be able to demonstrate how they are dealing with promoting physical activity (among other things and as an employer, have developed 'green' transport plans and taken steps to implement employee-friendly policies)

Regular exercise, such as walking and cycling, can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease by half

The number of cyclists killed in road traffic crashes last year was 114. Deaths from coronary heart disease in the same year were around 150,000.

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Physical activity

Cancer now affects 1 in 3 people during their lifetimes and 25% of all deaths each year are Cancer-related. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of colon cancer by 50% and breast, endometrial and prostate cancer by about one third. Six out of ten men and seven out of ten women are not active at the level recommended for health benefits. The recommended type and quantity of physical activity to enhance health is a minimum of 30 minutes moderate intensity activity on at least five days a week. Moderate intensity means expending 5 - 7.5 kcals per minute, which would equate to activities such as brisk walking for half an hour a day.

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Physical Activity

One cause of the rise in obesity is the decrease in physical activity among children. In a report, Sport England claims that children aren't getting enough time for PE and games. In 1994, 32% of 6 to 8 year olds were getting the recommended two hours of exercise a week. Last year, that figure was down to just 11%. For 9 to 11 year olds, the report shows a fall from 46% to 21% in the same period.

The Scottish Health Survey of 1998 revealed that young Scots, particularly girls, are also now taking less exercise. The amount of exercise taken by boys stays roughly steady through the childhood years, at 15 hours a week; girls only manage seven hours by the time they reach 14 or 15. Professor Marmot - "Taking the issue of obesity and exercise, it is not enough to say to people: 'you must take more exercise'. There is also the whole question about where that fits into people's lives. Are there sports facilities available, is it safe for people to ride bikes?"

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Physical Activity (cont)

Young people are also walking and cycling less, particularly to school. Data on school travel show that the proportion of 5-10 year olds being driven to school has increased from 22% in 1985/6 to 36% in 1998/2000 with corresponding decreases in the proportions walking and cycling.

Habits formed in childhood - in this case of a sedentary lifestyle persist into adulthood.

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Mental Health

The average U.K. commuting journey, at 45 minutes, is the longest in Europe. Many people say it is the most stressful part of their day.

Physical activity in itself improves mental health and well-being. This could be through production of endorphins.

Community Severance

People who live on main roads cross the road to visit a neighbour or friend many times less than those who do not.

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Crashes

At 1.21 fatalities per 100,000 our child pedestrian casualty rate is the worst in Europe.

There is a five fold difference in traffic casualty rate (KSI) between children in social class 1 and those in social class 5

The number of cyclists killed in road traffic crashes last year was 114. Deaths from coronary heart disease in the same year were around 150,000.

The NHS spends £1.6 billion each year in treating injury. The total value to the country of avoiding a single road crash death is estimated at almost £900,000.

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Air Quality and Pollution

Levels of pollutants in the passenger compartment of the car are higher than those in the air outside.

Motor vehicle emissions such as particulates, NO₂ and ground level ozone are important triggers of asthma attacks.

Particulates are responsible for bringing forward 8,100 deaths each year and creating an additional 10,500 hospital admissions for respiratory disease

DH's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP)

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Congestion and economic activity

The CBI estimates that traffic congestion costs businesses in the UK £20 billion per annum. It also causes 1.6 billion extra hours travelling each year.

Congestion in Britain is the worst in Europe. Traffic on Britain's roads has increased by over a third in the last twenty years. A similar rate of increase is forecast for the next twenty years. Motorway traffic has increased at more than eleven times the rate of motorway construction over the last decade. (The Bow Group)

Income is one of the most important determinants of health.

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Climate Change

The average British resident travelled over 6,800 miles a year in 1999/2001, an increase of five per cent since 1989/91. Car (including van and lorry) travel now accounts for 82 per cent of total annual mileage. Energy consumption by transport was 55 million tonnes of oil equivalent in 2001 - this represented 34 per cent of all UK energy. UK emissions of carbon dioxide - the main greenhouse gas causing climate change - are higher now than they were in 1997, when Labour first came to power, according to provisional Government estimates. The figures suggest Labour will struggle to meet its promise of cutting 1990 carbon dioxide levels by 20 per cent by 2010.

The effects of climate change include an increase in turbulent weather (storms and high intensity precipitation). This leads to power outages, damage to infrastructure and flooding

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Cycling is close to being an ideal form of exercise.

It is:

- Aerobic - it uses major muscle groups (in the legs) and causes the heart rate and respiration to increase in order to supply the muscles
- It is low weight bearing - because the cycle takes the weight of the body off the legs much less pressure is exerted on the joints than in running for example. Cycling is therefore a good form of exercise for people with joint problems
- Cycling is a low skill activity - (by contrast with ballet for example) although navigating today's roads may sometimes seem very skilled it is essentially a skill that can be once acquired and never forgotten.
- Those who eschew sports orientated recreational activity, such as women, may find commuter cycling acceptable. Cycling can take people out into green-space and the countryside which has, in itself been shown to have health benefits

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Walking too!

Because walking is weight bearing it offers protection against osteoporosis. (more women die with osteoporosis than of coronary heart disease [CHD])

Anyone can do it regardless of culture, sex or religion

It needs no equipment

People who have had an episode of CHD can walk their way back to health at their own pace

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The Policy Imperative

Saving Lives: Our healthier nation, the Government's public health strategy proposes that "local players and communities can provide incentives to employees to cycle or walk to work, or leave their cars at home"

The NSF for coronary heart disease refers to the development of green transport plans. NSFs for diabetes, CHD and Older People all have increasing physical activity as priorities

The report from the Social Exclusion Unit on transport has prompted DH to look at access to hospitals.

DH has recently consulted on *Choosing Health and Choosing Activity*. It has also published a *Strategy for Walking and Cycling*.

Bradford City PCT's priorities for improving health are physical activity, healthy diet and smoking cessation.

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'Walking & Cycling: an Action Plan'

Measures include:

- a programme of new links to extend the National Cycle Network to hundreds of schools;
- an investment of more than £500,000 to upgrade cycle provision at 200 rail stations;
- improved promotion of walking and cycling both locally and nationally, including a new web portal for those seeking information on where, how and why to cycle;
- better training in child pedestrian and cycling skills, including a new National Standard for Child Cycle Training;
- improved training for local authority transport staff in providing for, and promoting, walking and cycling.
- an amendment to the Traffic Management Bill, to make cycling safer in towns and cities

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Launching the action plan at the annual Parliamentary Bike Ride, Kim Howells said: "I am delighted that we have been able to bring forward measures which will make cycling and walking easier, safer and more attractive. Walking and cycling offer tremendous health, transport and social benefits, as well as being enjoyable means of getting around. We want more people to choose to walk and cycle more often.