



THE CARDIO-COMMUTE: Can it save the world?

GETTING TO WHERE WE WANT TO GO IS AN EVERYDAY TASK AND MOST OF US USE A VARIETY OF WAYS TO help us get around. Some days we're drivers, other days pedestrians, sometimes cyclists, and some days we're all three. But what factors do we consider when choosing how to get to our destination? Here are a few things to think about...

Driving

Leads to social isolation¹ and is associated with weight-gain

Each additional hour spent in a car per day is associated with a 6% increase in the likelihood of obesity.^{1,2}

Obesity is bad for your health

Health impacts associated with obesity include: increased risk of Type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers and osteoarthritis, as well as social stigmatization, discrimination, and poor body image, which may lead to depression.³

Leads to injury

Traffic injuries are the second leading cause of death for people age 5-29 worldwide.¹

Leads to air pollution

Affects kids the most and has been shown to cause childhood asthma exacerbations.⁷

Has been correlated with increased mortality, cardiovascular mortality and morbidity, the onset of childhood asthma, and exacerbation of respiratory symptoms in adults.⁷

Is a major contributor to greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change.¹

Health effects of climate change may include: more pollen, more allergies, more mosquitoes, more heat-related mortality, flood, famine, population displacement and war.^{8,9,10}

It's Expensive!

Requires extensive public expenditures on infrastructure as well as private expenditures on vehicle costs and fossil fuels.¹²

Leads to increased healthcare costs due to associated health risks.

Cardio-Commute*

Associated with decreased obesity and longer life^{1,4,5}

Each kilometre walked per day decreases the risk of obesity by 4.8%.²

Bike commuting can reduce the risk of premature mortality by approximately one third.¹

Physical activity is good for your health

Moderate activity (about 30 min/day 5 days per week in adults) has been associated with decreased rates of mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, dementia, breast cancer and colon cancer.¹

Leads to fewer injuries

There is evidence of a "safety in numbers" effect: substantial increases in bike use have been accompanied by reductions in the number of serious injuries to cyclists.⁶

Is impeded by air pollution

Cyclists and pedestrians breathe less concentrated air pollution than drivers (they're farther away from the cars but they breathe faster and may inhale more).^{1,5}

Despite the ill-effects of air pollution and injury, the benefits of cycling are still 7 times greater than the risks.⁵

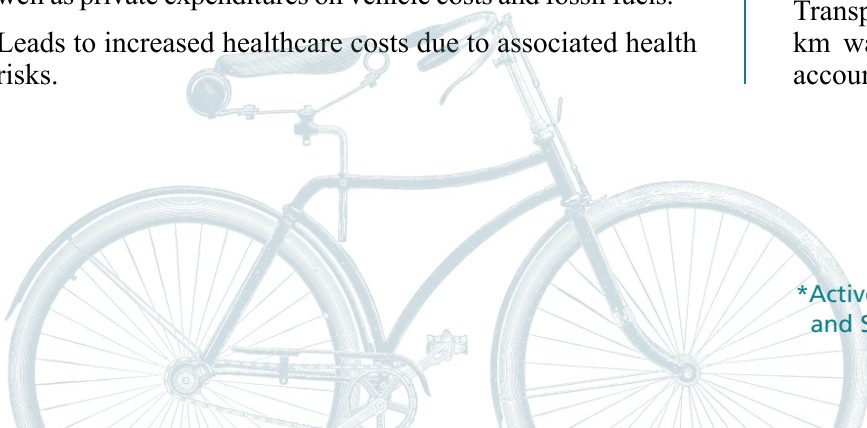
Making small changes from car-use to bike-use can result in significant reductions in CO2 emissions.¹¹

It's Cheap!

Requires much less road space and infrastructure than driving.¹²

Leads to decreased healthcare costs. The New Zealand Transport Agency estimated in 2008 a savings of \$4.27 per km walked and \$2.14 per km cycled (NZ \$) taking into account morbidity, mortality, and health-sector costs.¹³

*Active Transport: Walking, Cycling, Rollerblading, Wheeling, and Skateboarding



How do we make it easier and more convenient for more of us to cardio-commute more often?

These evidence-based solutions will help:

- Bike lanes, bike routes, well-lit streets, parks and low-cost recreational facilities.^{1,6,16}
- Traffic calming measures like speed limits <30kph, road humps, pedestrian crossings.¹
- Neighbourhoods with high “walkability” measurements, such as nearby shops, public transit, sidewalks, and fewer single-family homes.^{1,14, 11}
- High street connectivity like the classic grid pattern where streets cross at right angles and form small blocks and numerous intersections.^{1,14}
- Increased residential and employment density.^{1,14}
- Better public transport.¹⁴
- Attractive street and neighbourhood design.^{15,16}
- Support from schools and work places, walking school bus programs, available bike racks, change rooms and showers.¹⁷
- Car congestion fees and expensive parking spots.¹
- More people walking, biking, rollerblading and skate boarding. Humans like to go with the flow...the more we cardio-commute and make it cool, the safer it'll be for everyone, and the more people will participate!^{15,18,19}

What can you do?

Put down your keys and strap on your sneakers—lead by example and get other people to join you to help grow the flock of cardio-commuters.

Speak up—Ask schools, workplaces, colleagues, and elected officials to support the things that make your cardio-commute easier!

So, can cardio-commuting save the world? Difficult to say—but if enough of us self-propel more often we'll certainly be many steps closer to the world we want.

“The World Health Organization has made a handy online tool so you can estimate the savings of walking and cycling: www.heatwalkingcycling.org”

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