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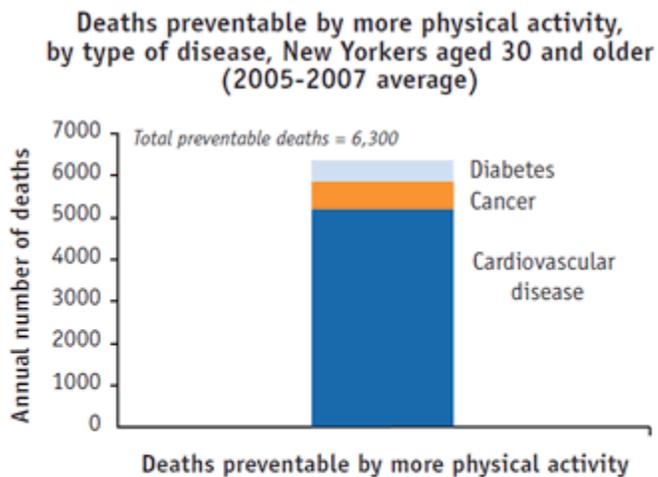
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New Yorkers Who Let Their Feet Do the Commuting Can Reap Real Health Benefits

New Yorkers Stay Healthy by Walking, Biking to Work; Using Active Transportation and Public Transportation instead of Car Trips Improves Health, Traffic Safety, and Air Quality

May 19, 2011 – New York is one of the nation’s most foot-friendly cities, and people who take advantage of that fact are likely to be healthier for it, a [Health Department report](#) confirms. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. One in eight deaths annually among New Yorkers aged 30 and over could be prevented with more physical activity. Active transportation - any self-propelled mode of transportation (walking, jogging, bicycling, or in-line skating) to get from one place to another - is an easy way to remain physically active. In fact, most New Yorkers get far more physical activity just getting from one place to another than they do through deliberate exercise. The report also outlines other health benefits of active transportation, including reduced air pollution and injury rates. The report, “Health Benefits of Active Transportation in New York City,” is available on nyc.gov.



“Just 10 minutes of exercise at a time can add up to improved long-term health,” said Dr. Thomas Farley, New York City Health Commissioner. “And active transportation is the simplest way to incorporate that amount of exercise into your daily routine.”

“New York is building a healthier city through better street design,” said DOT Commissioner Sadik-Khan. “In New York, 80 percent of the city’s public space are our streets and sidewalks, so designs that make it easier to walk, ride bikes and invite New Yorkers to be outside can have a positive impact on health.”

These findings quantify preventable mortality using methods from a national analysis that relied on previously published evidence on the causal associations between modifiable risk factors and cause of death.

Sources: New York City Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2004; NYC DOHMH Office of Vital Statistics 2005-2007.

In addition to reducing premature death, brisk walking or biking for just a half hour every weekday reduces the risk of heart disease. Brisk walking for 20 to 30 minutes per day also can reduce diabetes risk by 30%. On average, people who walk or bike to work log more than an hour of active transportation time daily. New Yorkers who use public

transportation also use active transportation when they walk to and from the subway or bus stop. New Yorkers who take public transportation for most of their commute get almost half an hour more daily physical activity than those who use a personal car or taxi.

More than half of New York City workers use public transportation on a daily basis, which is safer than driving. In fact, the city's traffic-related death rate is less than one third of the national rate (4 vs. 14 per 100,000). Nationally, for every 100 million miles traveled, passenger death rates on mass transit are 95% less than passenger death rates in motor vehicles.

New York City continues to get safer for pedestrians. Pedestrian deaths, which make up the largest portion of traffic deaths in NYC, have declined 59% since 1990 (from 366 in 1990 to 151 in 2010). Traffic engineering interventions, such as lane reconfigurations and sidewalk extensions, can reduce the number of pedestrian injury crashes at high-risk intersections and traffic corridors in New York City, according to New York City Department of Transportation evaluations.

Using public and active transportation rather than driving also contributes to better air quality, which can in turn contribute to long-term health benefits from breathing clean air. As people drive less, air quality will improve. Reducing pedestrians' proximity to heavy traffic volumes can reduce their exposure to harmful pollutants. The City's recent creation of a car-free pedestrian plaza in Times Square in 2009 substantially reduced levels of nitrogen dioxide – a major air pollutant from motor vehicles – in the plaza.

New Yorkers can take the following steps to incorporate more exercise into their daily activities and stay safe:

- Take advantage of everyday opportunities to walk or bike to work, school, stores, or other destinations.
- If you can't actively commute for the full trip, take public transportation and get off a stop or two early and walk.
- Wear a helmet when biking. Working cyclists and children 13 or younger are required to by law—everyone else should.
- When walking, always cross with the light, not against it.

City initiatives that can foster opportunities for more exercise include:

- The New York City Department of Transportation's installation of safety and traffic-calming measures citywide such as pedestrian countdown signals, refuge islands, sidewalk extensions and lane reconfigurations.
- The New York City Department of Transportation's expansion of New York City's bike lane system, the community plaza program and the public art program are creating attractive, active destinations that invite New Yorkers to come and remain outside
- The New York City Bicycle Access Law allows tenants of office buildings to request bicycle access for their employees. In response to a request, a building owner or manager must either grant access or request an exception from the New York City Department of Transportation.