

# ACTIVE NATION

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF

## Cycling and Walking in Scotland



Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. Walking and cycling are cheap and sustainable ways of getting around and are some of the best ways to get people to move more every day.

## ACTIVE

### Encouraging people to move more

People in Scotland don't exercise often enough. Getting more people to walk and cycle regularly would contribute to a **healthier, happier Scotland** for future generations and save the NHS millions.

**39%** Number of adults meeting the physical activity guidelines of 30 minutes of moderate activity five days per week<sup>1</sup>



**£94m**

Cost of inactivity to NHS Scotland each year<sup>1</sup>

**2,500** Deaths in Scotland of which physical inactivity was a factor<sup>1</sup>



Children who walk and cycle regularly concentrate better in class and achieve higher grades.<sup>2</sup>

**11%** of children in Scotland meet the daily recommended 60 minutes of activity<sup>3</sup>



Riding a bike improves the development of motor skills, coordination and balance<sup>3</sup>



## DISEASE

### Preventing illness and promoting good health

**Heart disease:** Coronary heart disease affects around 6% of Scots. The drugs alone cost £116.8 million a year.<sup>4</sup>

**2x** More likely to die from heart disease if you are inactive<sup>4</sup>



**46%** Decreased risk of developing cardiovascular disease if you cycle to work<sup>4</sup>



**Cancer:** By moving more, people can reduce the risk of breast, bowel and womb cancer.

**45%**



Decreased risk of cancer if you cycle to work<sup>5</sup>



Staying active may help to prevent former patients developing secondary cancers<sup>6</sup>

**Diabetes:** 5.3% of Scots suffer from diabetes.<sup>7</sup> The drugs cost the Scottish NHS £90 million each year (up from £73.2 million in 2012/13).<sup>8</sup>

**87%**



of diabetics have late-onset type 2 diabetes associated with a lack of physical activity<sup>9</sup>

**33-50%**



Lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes if you are physically active<sup>10</sup>

**Asthma:** Walking and cycling can help to reduce asthma symptoms, even for those with exercise-induced asthma.<sup>11</sup>

Traffic pollution has been linked to the significant increase in asthma amongst young people and adults in recent decades. Walking and cycling is a low carbon way to travel which contributes to cleaner air in cities<sup>11</sup>



**Mental health:** Cycling is proven to reduce stress, anxiety and increases self-esteem.<sup>12</sup>



Physical activity can be as effective as medication and counselling<sup>13</sup>

Mental health benefits are greatest in 'green' spaces<sup>14</sup> such as the National Cycle Network and greenways






# These are just some of the health benefits of walking and cycling that should make investment in active travel infrastructure and behaviour change programmes a public health priority.

Contact us to find out how Sustrans can help to support walking and cycling projects in your local area, including funding for infrastructure through our Community Links, National Cycle Network, Street Design, Safer Routes to School fund and Community Links PLUS programmes and behaviour change projects in schools, workplaces and communities.


## References:

- <sup>1</sup> The Scottish Health Survey 2014: Volume 1: 5 Physical Activity
- <sup>2</sup> British Medical Journal (2004). Education And Debate: Are there proven mental health benefits associated with cycling and walking?
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- <sup>4</sup> NHS National Services Scotland (2017). Scottish Heart Disease Statistics
- <sup>5</sup> Celis-Morales, C. A. et al. (2017). Association between active commuting and incident cardiovascular disease, cancer, and mortality: prospective cohort study. Published in the British Medical Journal
- <sup>6</sup> Scottish Cancer Prevention Network (2018). Role of Obesity in Cancer Survival and Recurrence. Published online
- <sup>7</sup> NHS (2016) Scottish Diabetes Survey.
- <sup>8</sup> Information Services Division Scotland (2016). Prescribing Figures: Prescription Cost Analysis Financial Year – 2015/16.
- <sup>9</sup> Diabetes UK (2018). Looking after your diabetes: Getting active and staying active. Published online
- <sup>10</sup> American Diabetes Association (2018). Lower your risk: What Can Physical Activity Do for Me? Published Online
- <sup>11</sup> Asthma UK (2018) Exercise and activities: If you're looking after your asthma well, you shouldn't have any problems exercising. Published online.
- <sup>12</sup> Cycle Scheme (2017). Cycling and the mental health benefits. Published online
- <sup>13</sup> Mental Health Foundation (2005). Up and Running: Exercise therapy and the treatment of mild or moderate depression in primary care.
- <sup>14</sup> Barton, J. and Pretty, J. (2010). What is the Best Dose of Nature and Green Exercise for Improving Mental Health? A Multi-Study Analysis. Published in Environmental Science & Technology

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