

# Walk to School Programs

## A Component of CDC's State-based Physical Activity Initiative

Almost 85% of children's trips to school are made by car, school bus, public transit or other modes of transportation just over 15% of all trips are made by walking or bicycling. (NHTS 2001, analyzed by S. Ham DNPA 2005) Children's dependence on motorized transportation represents a missed opportunity for physical activity, increases traffic congestion (Morning Peak Trip by Purpose, Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, London, Greater Vancouver Regional District. 1999) and may threaten the safety and quality of the environment.

### Physical Activity during Childhood:

- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce fat.
- Prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety and is related to higher levels of self-esteem.

### Current Status of Physical Activity for U.S. Youth:

- 35% do not participate in regular vigorous physical activity. (YRBSS 2003)
- As age increases, levels of physical activity decline.
- Young people aged 2-17 years spend an average of 4.7 hours of screen time per day, of which about 2.5 hours is watching television. (Media in the Home, Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2000)

- Over the past three decades, the prevalence of childhood overweight has tripled. (NCHS 2004)

### Healthy People 2010 objectives:

- Increase the proportion of children's trips to school  $\leq$  1 mile made by walking from 31% to 50%
- Increase the proportion of children's trips to school  $\leq$  2 miles made by bicycling from 2.4% to 5.0%.

### National Strategies to Promote Walking and Bicycling to School:

- A Report to the President from the DHHS and DOE (2000) included an objective to "Enable Communities to develop and promote the use of safe, well-maintained, and close-to-home sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle paths, trails, parks, recreational facilities, and community designs featuring mixed-use development and a connected grid of streets."
- CDC's KidsWalk-to-School Program goals are
  1. To increase opportunities for physical activity by encouraging children to walk and bike to school in groups accompanied by adults.
  2. To encourage communities to build coalitions to create an environment that is supportive of safe walking and bicycling to school.



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