

# FitFacts™

American Council  
on Exercise®

## ENERGIZE YOUR WORK DAY WITH AN ACTIVE COMMUTE

Interested in exercise, but not sure how to squeeze it into your busy schedule? Build it into your work day by making your commute more physically active. Besides saving on fuel costs and reducing environmental pollutants, creating a habit of active commuting boosts fitness and could protect you from heart disease, obesity, and excessive stress.

### Step Away from the Car

The average American driver may spend over 450 hours each year behind the wheel. That comes out to nearly 11 work weeks behind the wheel, according to the Center for Transportation Excellence. Driving-related inactivity combined with stress contributes to a host of health problems.

One study of 2,364 working adults showed that individuals who walked or bicycled to work on a regular basis reaped significant health benefits. Men and women who actively commuted were more fit compared to those who didn't commute. The study found that male commuters also had reduced body mass index, obesity, blood pressure, insulin, and triglyceride levels.

A review of eight studies found a significant reduction in cardiac risk with active commuting for both men and women, but this effect was stronger for women.

Similarly, a Swedish study of more than 16,000 workers found that men and women who walked to work and men who used public transportation were much less likely to be overweight and obese than those who drove to work.



### Go Public

Taking the train may not sound like an active way to commute, but one study found that train commuters walked on average 30% more a day and were four times more likely to achieve the recommended 10,000 steps a day than drivers. Public transit users also walk more to get to the bus stop, bus platform and their final destination.

In addition to the physical benefits from walking more, public transportation users also enjoy mental health benefits, including reduced stress and increased social interactions.

### Getting Started

Many employers support active commuting by offering bicycle parking and storage, onsite showers, and subsidized public transportation passes. Some even offer a guaranteed emergency ride home for alternative transportation users. Check with your human resources office or benefits team to find out what resources are available. If they're not available, ask your employer to consider adding them.

Whether or not you have workplace support for an active commute, you can take steps toward making your commute a healthier one.

Here is how:

- Ask around. Chances are, someone in your workplace already bikes, walks, runs or rides the bus to work. Get first-hand advice on routes and other practical matters.
- Check online. Join a community of bicycle commuters to share tips and arrange riding together.
- Brush up. Learn about bicycle road use laws in your state before hitting the pavement and make sure you know how to change a flat tire, fix a chain and perform other minor repairs en route.
- If walking or bicycling all the way to work isn't practical, do it part of the way. Many public transit services offer bike racks. You could also get off the train or bus one stop early to increase your daily walking time. Or bicycle to work one way and ride the bus home and do the opposite the next day.
- Some health clubs offer shower-only memberships for active commuters. Depending on how much you sweat, you could also keep a spare set of clothing, washrag and towel, baby wipes, and deodorant at your work station for a quick clean-up.

### Additional Resources

[Bicycle Commuter Act — League of American Bicyclists](#)

[Six-Point Bicycle Safety Check — www.be-safe.org](#)

[10 Tips for Walking to Work — About.com](#)



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