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August 12, 2010

The health benefits of walking to school

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Posted by [Alisa Bowman](#) at 05:00:00 AM on August 12, 2010

I am looking forward to September. That's when my kid starts first grade. This is a momentous occasion in our house, but not for the reasons you might suspect. Yeah, the little one is becoming a big girl.

But the real reason I'm looking forward to first grade is that we're working parents. We've been paying for child care almost since they day the little bugger was born. When school starts this year, my household expenditures will drop by nearly \$9000.

The first day of school is auspicious for another reason, too. My daughter and I can walk.

The closest daycare I could find for her first 6 years of life required a car trip. But, in the borough of Emmaus, all of the schools are within walking distance. I knew the walk would be good for us in many ways. Obviously, it's good exercise. It's also a great way to bond. And it keeps my car off the street which helps improve the air we all breathe.

But a new study just released this week points to yet another benefit of walking to school. These researchers from the University of Buffalo found that children who walked to school had smaller elevations in blood pressure, heart rate and perceived stress later on when taking an exam than kids who had ridden to school.

The researchers say that this lower stress reactivity could protect the walkers from heart disease later in life.

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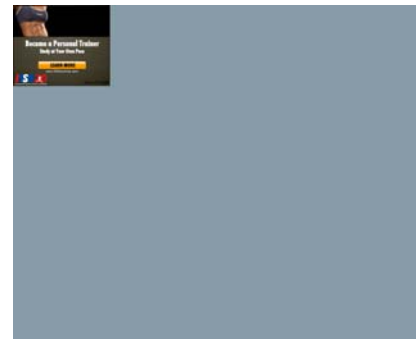
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ABOUT THE WRITERS



ALISA BOWMAN Alisa Bowman has been a health junkie and health journalist for nearly 20 years. A former newspaper reporter and magazine editor, her articles and essays have appeared in national magazines such as Parade, Better Homes &

Gardens and Women's Health. She runs, adores vegetables and meditates in Emmaus, where her husband and daughter are known to eat Cheetos behind her back. She also writes about marriage at [ProjectHappilyEverAfter.com](#).



IRENE KRAFT Irene Kraft has a passion for health and fitness. During her years at The Morning Call, she's been an award-winning nutrition writer, editor of health sections and an editor of Change of Heart, a three-year project focused on reducing heart disease in the Lehigh

Valley. She loves fitness walks with her dog Ranger. And she likes to think her younger son inherited his interest in health from her. He's a cardiologist practicing in the Valley.



VERONICA TORREJON Veronica Torrejon, a Morning Call reporter since 2005, has been the health reporter since 2008. A longtime science geek, she worked as a college intern and then research assistant at the USDA Carl Hayden Bee Research Center in Tucson,

Ariz. She was an intern on the health/science team at the San Jose Mercury News in San Jose, Calif.

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