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Walking to school keeps the heart healthy--study

by [Neharika Sabharwal](#) - August 12, 2010

Walking as a part of a regular journey to school is not only healthy and an ideal way to build the recommended hour of exercise into a child's daily routine but is also an effective measure to reduce stress, claims a new study.

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According to researchers, children who walk to school experience less cardiovascular reactivity, which refers to increase in heart rate and blood pressure when faced with a tense situation in the class room as opposed to those who get a ride.

Senior investigator of the study, James Roemmich, associate professor of pediatrics and exercise and [nutrition](#) science from the University of Buffalo stated, "The cardiovascular disease process begins in childhood, so if we can find some way of stopping or slowing that process, that would provide



"We know that physical activity has a protective effect on the development of cardiovascular disease, and one way it may be doing so is by [reducing stress](#) reactivity."

Study details

In a bid to assess whether a morning stroll can prepare the kids to face stress, the researchers invited a group of 20 boys and 20 girls, all Caucasian, aged 10 to 14 years to the Behavioral Medicine Research Laboratory.

Half the participants were randomly assigned to sit in a comfy chair and watch a 10-minute slide show of images of a suburban neighborhood (to stimulate a car ride).

The remaining half were asked to walk one-mile on a treadmill with a bag pack and view the same images of the suburban neighborhood projected onto a screen (to stimulate the walk to school).

After a relaxation period of 20-minutes all the children took a Stroop test. In this they were asked to identify color names printed in the wrong color, such as the word "green" printed in blue ink.

Outcome of the study

The researchers noted that on an average the heart beat of kids given a stimulated ride to school increased by 11 beats per minutes while that of children who walked rose by about three beats per minute.

In addition, the rise in blood pressure was more than three times higher and the stress level was double in the passive commuters.

Roemmich stated, "The perception of a stressor as a threat is the beginning of the [stress](#) reactivity process, so if you can dampen that initial perception, then you reduce the magnitude of the fight-or-flight response.

"This results in lower heart rate and blood pressure responses to the stressor. Exercise helped dampen even the initial response."

A word of advise

Since it is unclear how long the protective [effect of exercise](#) lasts, experts want [parents](#) to encourage physical activity in children throughout the day.

According to researchers if walking to school is not feasible, parents should promote other activities for the kids since it benefits their health and general well-being in the long run.

Roemmich states, "It's just more evidence of why recess is important."

The study appears in the August 2010 issue of 'Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.'

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this really helps me a lot in our research.

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7 Cancer Symptoms Men Tend to Ignore

Men often tend to delay health checkups until they have symptoms. But they need to get real and aware of anything that's different to keep cancers at bay.

by Lisa Anderson - April 21, 2010



Besides annual checkups and tests, which are as important, sometimes, it's just equally important to pay attention to your body and notice anything that's odd or unexplainable.

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Causes and Remedies of Bad Breath

Bad breath is one of the biggest put off. Why live with it when you can easily get rid of it?

by Dr. Sania Siddiqui - May 4, 2010



Halitosis or bad breath is not an uncommon problem amongst people. But we are either ignorant of its causes or don't pay much attention to the unintentional inconvenience that we cause people around us.

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What is it about organic food that is luring people in large numbers? Themedguru finds out.

by Gunjan Mehra - August 3, 2010



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