



Walk to School benefits

- 1 Chance to spend quality time with your son or daughter
- 2 An opportunity to talk about the people, buildings and things you see on the way to school; all helping your child's knowledge and experience which of course helps with school work.
- 3 A chance to talk about road safety; the safest places to walk and cross the roads; vital for helping your child become more independent.
- 4 Helping with fitness. Walking is a great and safe way to exercise.
- 5 Whether young or old exercise and fresh air helps us to be happy.
- 6 Evidence shows exercise helps us to perform better in school (and at work)
- 7 Habits formed when young stay with us

What are the health benefits of walking?

Here's a startling fact for you: Walking just over half a mile to school and back will mean you and your child will at least walk 6 miles per week. This will burn 500-1000 calories per week and reduces the risk of premature death by 20-30%. (Ref Walkit.com)

Walking will help protect you against:

- Cardiovascular disease (coronary heart disease and stroke), as well as 'risk factors' such as high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Cancer (particularly bowel cancer, and breast cancer in post-menopausal women)
- Type 2 diabetes
- Obesity

It has also been shown to improve:

- Musculoskeletal health (for example osteoarthritis and lower back pain)
- Mental health, happiness and well-being

Why walk to school? There are many benefits. Here are just some of them:

Benefits for your children

1. Fitness and health

Most of us are very aware that childhood obesity is rising fast – in 2008, 31% of children between the ages of 2 and 15 were overweight or obese. As you'll read in [Walking for Health](#), children need at least an hour of physical activity per day, and walking to school is a great way to get some of that exercise.

There are also concerns about the level of pollution that children are exposed to sitting inside cars in congested or slow moving traffic. When planning your walking journey to school, it may well be possible to

find a route which is quiet or traffic-free, and walking through green spaces such as parks can make you feel calmer and happier.

2. Concentration at school

Evidence shows that children who are physically active on the way to school burn off some of their excess energy, and are more able to settle down and focus well in lessons.

3. Road safety skills

Good habits learned young are learned well. Teaching your child to walk safely to school will stand them in good stead for the rest of their life.

4. Socialising and independence

If your child joins a walking bus, or is old enough to walk to school with friends, they will have extra time in the day to build friendships, and feel comfortable around other people. And most teenagers, like all of us, need time to themselves – walking home can be a great time to think, relax, and mull over their day.

Benefits for you

1. Fitness and health

If you walk with your child to school, you will also get fitter! If your child is old enough to walk fairly fast, you'll be adding to your daily total of physical activity. And because it's much easier to predict how long walking will take you, your journey to school is likely to be much less stressful than being at the mercy of traffic.

2. Cost

This one's easy... the amount you spend on petrol will go down!

3. Time

It may not be your first instinct, but walking to school might actually save you time. Here's how: Firstly, it could be that walking to school doesn't actually take you much longer than driving (when was the last time you timed each option?) If your school has a walking bus scheme, you might decide to walk along only some days of the week – leaving your child with other trusted parents on the other days, and saving yourself some precious minutes. If your child is older, and able to walk home by themselves or with friends, just think of all that time you won't need to spend waiting for them to dawdle out of the school gates!

Benefits for the environment and community

During term-time, one in five cars on the road at the peak travel time of 8.45 a.m. Are parents driving their children to school? By switching to walking, we can save huge amounts of CO₂, helping to prevent climate change, and reduce levels of air pollution which are a major cause of asthma.

For residents of local communities near schools, trying to get to work at this time can be a huge struggle, what with traffic congestion in small residential streets, and the general mayhem of parents parking up, dropping kids off and snatching quick conversations with friends at the school gate.