



Parent/carer information pack

This information pack is designed to give parents/carers some background of the benefits of safe active travel for children. It is also designed to provide parents/carers with information on how they can engage in actions to encourage children's active travel. Additional resources are included on specific initiatives but parents/carers can also come up with their own ideas. Some parents/carers may also like to be part of a working group with other parents/carers to implement an active travel action plan.

01 The benefits for your children

Physical health

Walking or riding regularly to places, instead of driving, gives your children opportunities for daily physical activity that may help him or her avoid chronic disease and lead a healthy, happy life.

References and further reading:

+ [Active travel to school and cardiovascular fitness in Danish children and adolescents](#) ➤

Mental strength

Children who get physical activity in the morning arrive at school more alert and ready to learn - and studies show they perform better in the classroom.

References and further reading:

+ [Children who walk to school concentrate better](#) ➤

Environmental well-being

Reducing the number of cars through more people walking and cycling in a neighbourhood improves air quality, creating healthier environments where children live.

Reference and further reading:

+ [Active Travel Strategy. London: Department for Transport and Department of Health](#) ➤

Community connectedness

Children who regularly walk and ride in their neighbourhood enjoy a deeper connection to their community and find joy in nature and people along the way; which evidence shows leads to less stress and less depression.

Reference and further reading:

+ [The relationship between active travel to school and health-related fitness in children and adolescents: a systematic review](#) ➤

Role models

Children learn by example, and parents/carers can be powerful role models. Research shows that the involvement of parents/carers in physical activity can increase a child's participation. If children see the significant adults in their lives walking or cycling to places, or using public transport, they are more likely to learn that this is normal/acceptable behaviour and learn the skills associated with it (eg putting on a bicycle helmet, reading a bus timetable).

Set a good example for your child in the following ways:

- + Regularly participate in physical activity yourself.
- + Walk short distances instead of taking the car. Encourage and support walking and cycling to shops or local venues.
- + Take your child for regular walks around the neighbourhood. Babies and young children can be pushed along in prams – once they get older, encourage them to walk part of the way.
- + Reinforce the social benefits of being active as well as the physical benefits.
- + Help your child develop skills and strategies for coping with different physical activity environments.
- + Restrict television watching, surfing the net and playing computer games to less than two hours per day. Limit viewing to programs that family members specifically want to watch. When the program is finished, turn the television off.

02 Parent/Carer champions

Action-oriented parents/carers who care about children's health and the environmental effects of car congestion can be role models:

- + Walk or ride to places in your neighbourhood with your children
- + Watch out for all children in your neighbourhood
- + Share your views on the need to overcome barriers to active travel
- + Join a working group

03 But what about...

The time it takes to walk or ride?

Did you know it only takes about twenty minutes to walk a kilometre with a young child? Or that 30 minutes of physical activity at the beginning of the day can boost metabolism, can increase mental sharpness for 4-20 hours and can help your child sleep better at night?

Convenience?

For some parents there is no option but to drive their children to certain places. But these parents/carers can still engage in active travel too. All you have to do is find a safe and convenient location to park close to your destination and then accompany them for the rest of the journey.

04 Initiatives parents/carers can lead

There are a number of initiatives parents can take the lead on, including:

- + Find a safe and convenient location to park close to your destination and then accompany them for the rest of the journey, holding their hand when crossing roads
- + Ensuring your children's bicycles are working properly
- + Write a list of all the opportunities through-out the week you and your child/ren could actively travel.
- + Plan to make new routines for active travel.
- + Talk to your child/ren about the benefits of an active lifestyle and develop a list of the benefits and safety considerations.

05 Resources to help you with these activities are included in this pack.

Other things you can do include:

- + Talk to you children about Stop! Look! Listen! Think! every time you cross the road, and learning good road safety habits
- + Helping your children participate in Walk/Wheel once a week events
- + Helping your children participate in Walk Safely to School Day and Ride2School Day
- + Developing your own initiatives

[Walk/Wheel once a week guide](#) ➤

[Bicycle skills training \(AustCycle\)](#) ➤

[Park and Walk or Ride](#) ➤

[Facilities review](#) ➤

[Safety Town resources](#) ➤