

# Walk to School Programs

## A Component of CDC's State-based Physical Activity Initiative

**Eighty-five** percent of children's trips to school are made by car or school bus, and only **13%** of all trips to school are made by walking or bicycling. Children's dependence on their parents and other adults to drive them to and from school represents a missed opportunity for physical activity, increases traffic congestion, and threatens the safety and quality of the environment in which we all live.

### Physical Activity during Childhood:

- ▶ Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- ▶ Helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce fat.
- ▶ Prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure.
- ▶ Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety and is related to higher levels of self-esteem.

### Current Status of Physical Activity for U.S. Youth:

- ▶ **35%** do not participate in regular vigorous physical activity.
- ▶ As age increases levels of physical activity decline.

- ▶ Young people aged 2-18 spend an average of 4 hours a day watching television.
- ▶ Since 1980, the prevalence of childhood overweight has tripled.

### Healthy People 2010 objectives:

- ▶ Increase the proportion of children's trips to school  $\leq 1$  mile made by walking from **31% to 50%**.
- ▶ Increase the proportion of children's trips to school  $\leq 2$  miles made by bicycling from **2.4% to 5.0%**.

### National Strategies to Promote Walking and Bicycling to School:

- ▶ A Report to the President from the DHHS and DOE (2000) included an objective to "Enable communities to develop and promote the use of safe, well-maintained, and close-to-home sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle paths, trails, parks, recreational facilities, and community designs featuring mixed-use development and a connected grid of streets."
- ▶ CDC's KidsWalk-to-School Program goals are
  - 1) To increase opportunities for physical activity by encouraging children to walk and bike to school in groups accompanied by adults.
  - 2) To encourage communities to build coalitions to create an environment that is supportive of safe walking and bicycling to school.



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