



Bicycling: It's Good for You— and the Environment, Too

Bicycling is a great way to stay healthy—and not just for those doing the cycling. Research shows that cycling is one of the best things you can do for your body, your environment, and your community.

Individual Health Benefits of Cycling

Bicycling develops balance, coordination, circulation, and strength. It tones your body, burns calories, and strengthens the heart and bones. Since it helps build muscle, cycling also keeps your metabolic rate boosted long after you've finished your ride.

According to the Surgeon General, bicycling for 30 minutes a day can help you lose weight, improve energy levels, lighten your mood, and decrease the risk of chronic disorders. Can't spare 30 minutes a day? No worries. A recent Harvard university study found that biking for as little as five minutes a day can stave off weight gain. Bicycling also has several advantages over other exercises; it exercises the heart better than walking and without the pounding of jogging. It also puts less pressure on your joints.

Environmental Health Benefits

When you ride your bicycle, you're helping the planet too. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, transportation accounts for 33% of CO₂ emissions in America—and more than half of that comes from cars. If you ride your bike to work just one day a week, you'll cut back on your carbon emissions and reduce your contribution to CO₂ global warming by 20% each year. You'll also be helping to reduce America's dependence on fossil fuels and decreasing the need to build more roadways.

Public Health Benefits

Cycling may be good for your community's health as well. A study published last year in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that “communities with more walkers and cyclists are healthier than those where people must rely on cars to get around.”

Shift Your Gears & Get Cycling!

How do you make cycling a habit that will stick? Set simple goals, build gradually, and above all, keep it fun. Here are a few suggestions:

- The average American spends over 45 minutes a day commuting. Try starting your workday off on a healthier note and cycle to the office once a week.
- Bike one daily excursion for which you'd normally drive.
- Join or form a cycling club/group and stick to a regular schedule. There's encouragement in numbers.
- Get a cycling buddy, or round up the troops and go for a family ride after dinner.