

Keeping fit

Walking or biking to school has many benefits



By Caroline Harris

Are there benefits of your teenager walking or biking to and from school?

Did you walk or bike ride to and from school when you were a teenager? Many of you will say yes and those of you who didn't will say you lived too far to have the option of getting the benefits physical exercise in this fashion.

If you live too far from school there is a solution you and your teenager can come up with together to overcome this obstacle. You can work with your teen to come up with a mutually decided drop-off location that is still going to give them the benefits of the physical activity and reduce the automobile emissions at the same time. Remember to start small, teens may not be eager to walk every day in the beginning. Start by planning "Walking Wednesdays" and, over time, they will feel better and notice the physical and mental benefits and want to walk several days per week.

There are many benefits, not just for your teenager, when they are encouraged to walk or bike ride to and from school. Your gasoline consumption and commute time to work is reduced. Classroom focus, grades and your teen's independence will increase. Your teen's health and wellness will improve.

The environment also benefits because walking or biking doesn't release pollutants in the air like your automobile.

Fewer cars will be travelling through the neighbourhood and as a result there will be less congestion at drop-off and pick-up points outside the school thus

reducing your commute time to work. You will be saving a few extra bucks each week on gasoline as well. These extra bucks could be used towards your teens allowance for doing chores at home to help them contribute as a responsible family member or to be used towards them making healthier lunch choices on the days they visit local restaurants on their lunch break! It is a win-win situation for the entire family.

Neighbourhoods will become friendlier as people will be getting out and interacting with one another. Walking or biking to school allows an opportunity for your teen to socialize with their friends before school, thereby reducing the chatter of morning greetings during valuable classroom time. The walk or bike ride will increase blood flow to your teen's brain and help improve concentration, focus and memory and other key factors associated with learning and as a result help improve school grades. Walking or biking to school allows your teen time to reflect and start thinking and preparing for the school day.

Another benefit of your teen walking or biking to and from school is the increased independence as their pedestrian confidence grows. Your teen will not have to rely on a parent to taxi them around as much and, in turn, we will be gaining confidence in our teen.

This type of physical activity, if done regularly, even for 10-20 minutes per day, will not only improve mental concentration and grades in the classroom but improve your teen's health and circulation and help keep your teenager in shape. Exercising by walking

or biking to school increases your teenager's strength, builds lean muscle and reduces body fat which also helps prevent and treat the teenage diabetes type II epidemic.

Cardiovascular endurance, balance and flexibility will improve with each step they take. The extra mobility will prevent or delay high blood pressure and the likelihood of your teenager remaining active into adulthood increases along with their improved self-image.

For best results in achieving a new plan to have your teen walk or bike to school remember that teens are too often told what to do instead of being invited to brainstorm with a parent to come up with a solution that works for everyone.

Teens are much more motivated to follow a plan they have helped create. Maybe this would be a good family conversation to bring up with your teen tonight over dinner.

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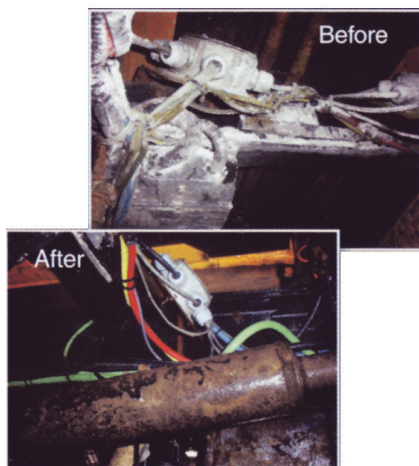
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