



Best practice bicycle safety – improvement fact sheet

Physical health

Overview

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), physical activity is “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure” [1]. The WHO figures show that one in four adults does not exercise enough. Globally, women are less active than men (23% vs. 32%), people in high-income countries (63% of active population) are less active than people in middle (74%) and low-income countries (84%). If the global population was **more active**, up to five million premature **deaths** per year **could be prevented** [2]. Of concern is the fact that society, including children and adolescents, is becoming more and more sedentary. The data from the European Union (EU) show only about one in four 11-year-olds and only one in seven 15-year-old reported they exercise moderately to vigorously (an activity that increases the heartbeat) at least one hour daily in 2018, which is a recommended amount by the WHO. In all EU countries, girls are less physically active than boys at both ages. Besides, physical activity also falls sharply between ages 11 to 15 in most EU countries for both genders [3].


Cycling, besides walking, is a physical activity that is most often listed as a great and very common example of physical activity that can **benefit a person’s health and fitness**. Cycling is a **low impact type of aerobic activity** that many people can **incorporate into their daily lives** as a **mode of transport, casual activity, or competitive sport**. It is a very **popular** physical activity that is relatively **easy to start** and is **suitable for most fitness levels** [4]. The challenge, however, is many people don’t have **access to spaces** where they would be able to cycle safely or engage in other physical activities [2].

Positive effects of cycling



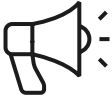
Cycling is a very **convenient physical activity** because it offers **different levels of intensity**, for example with adapting the length of the activity or with choosing harder terrain for cycling.

- » Cycling improves **cardiovascular health**:
 - Studies show that people who cycle to work experience notable health benefits, including improved cardiovascular functioning.
 - Cycling commuters have a 46% lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease, and a 52% lower risk of dying from the condition [4, 5].
- » Cycling improves **high blood pressure** (hypertension) issues:
 - After 3 months of regular cycling blood pressure can decrease by 4.3%. After 6 months the reduction can amount to 11.8%.
 - Cycling is an effective method to lower blood pressure of people with type 2 diabetes [4].
- » Cycling helps with **weight management**:
 - Cycling increases the metabolic rate, builds muscles and burns body fat. In a combination with a good diet, cycling helps people to reduce body fat and body mass [4].
- » Cycling improves **cardiorespiratory health**:
 - Cycling for about 170–250 minutes per week can greatly improve lung health [6].
 - Physical activity like cycling can help the immune system protect a person from respiratory infections [4].
- » Cycling helps to prevent different **site-specific cancers**, for example, of bladder, breast, colon, gastric, and renal [7].

Benefits

	Improves cardiovascular health
	Helps to regulate high blood pressure
	Helps to regulate body fat and body mass
	Helps to improve lung health

Challenges

	<p>To provide appropriate bicycle infrastructure</p>
	<p>Costs for planning, building and maintaining safe cycling networks</p>
	<p>Proper and effective promotion of cycling in connection to physical health</p>

References and links

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**SABRINA: No fears
about safety on
two wheels.**

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