

Public transit users 3 times more likely to keep fit

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A new study by researchers at the University of British Columbia suggests taking public transit may help you keep fit.

The study, published in the [Journal of Public Health Policy](#), finds that [people](#) who take [public transit](#) are three times more likely than those who don't to meet the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's suggested daily minimum of [physical activity](#).

Doctoral student Ugo Lachapelle and Assoc. Prof. Lawrence Frank of the UBC School of Community and Regional Planning used 4,156 travel surveys from metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, to examine whether transit and car trips were associated with meeting the recommended levels of physical activity by walking.

Because transit trips by bus and train often involve walking to and from stops, the study found that users are more likely to meet the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day, five days a week.

According to the study, people who drove the most were the least likely to meet the recommended level of physical activity.

"The idea of needing to go to the gym to get your daily dose of exercise is a misperception," says Frank, the J. Armand Bombardier Chairholder in Sustainable Transportation and a researcher at the UBC Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability. "These short walks

throughout our day are historically how we have gotten our activity. Unfortunately, we've engineered this activity out of our daily lives."

The researchers conclude that making transit incentives more broadly available may produce indirect health benefits by getting people walking, even if it's just in short bouts.

"This should be appealing to policy makers because it's easier to promote transit incentives - such as employer-sponsored passes or discount fares - than to restructure existing neighbourhoods," says Frank.

The research could have major implications for urban planning and public transit development, Lachapelle says.

"You don't necessarily have to rebuild communities or make major investments in infrastructure to promote public health," he says. "There are things we can do in the interim, such as encourage people to drive less, and adapt their lifestyles which will get people more physically active and generate fewer greenhouse gasses."

Source: University of British Columbia ([news](#) : [web](#))

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