

Could walking to work help fix the nation's health woes?

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Businesses will be encouraging their workers to walk to work as part of a new £1 million trial which gets underway this month.

A total of 678 people from 84 workplaces in Bath, Swansea and South Gloucestershire will be recruited to the new study, which is being led by the University of Bristol and funded by the NIHR.

The aim is to look at the effectiveness of employers encouraging their staff to walk to [work](#), and estimating the costs of developing and promoting [walking](#) schemes compared to the benefits of a more active

workforce and a reduction in car use.

An estimated £7.4 billion is spent every year on [health problems](#) related to a lack of exercise, according to a recent publication by Public Health England.

Encouraging adults in the UK to increase their level of [physical activity](#) is a major factor in helping to prevent chronic diseases including [heart disease](#), obesity, type 2 diabetes and some cancers.

The NHS recommends that adults should take at least 150 minutes of [moderate exercise](#) each week.

The trial, led by Dr Suzanne Audrey from the University of Bristol with colleagues at the Universities of Bath and Swansea, will see half of the employers given help to encourage their employees to walk to work, while the other half continue as usual.

At the start of the trial, 678 people will be asked to wear a monitor that measures their level of physical activity for seven days. This will then be repeated a year later.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) will track and record the amount of physical activity that takes place on the journey to work.

Everyone taking part will also be asked to complete travel diaries and questionnaires about the way they travel to work, the costs involved and their views about schemes that encourage people to walk. The information will show which factors encourage people to walk to work, and which can act as a barriers.

Dr Audrey, from the School of Social and Community Medicine at Bristol University, said: "There is evidence of a link between adult

obesity levels and the way people commute to work. Walking to work is an ideal way for some adults to include moderate exercise in their daily routine and help them reach the recommended levels of weekly physical activity."

Results of the study are expected in early 2018.

Provided by University of Bristol

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