

PATTERNS OF WALKING FOR EXERCISE AND TRANSPORT

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Walking for exercise has numerous health benefits. Although walking for transport may be similarly beneficial, it is more difficult to assess since it is largely incidental. The 1997 Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey collected 2 days of detailed time use diaries from a nationally representative sample 15+ years of age and therefore provides a unique opportunity to examine patterns (i.e., number of daily bouts and their duration) of these two types of walking relative to public health recommended levels of physical activity. The analysis sample included 7247 persons (3471 males and 3776 females) providing 14315 person-days of data. The diaries were formatted in five-minute time intervals, with space for respondents to record (in their own words) their primary activity, 'what else' they were doing at the same time (i.e., secondary activity), the location of the activity, others present during the activity, and for whom they did this activity. Accumulated daily episodes and minutes of walking for exercise (including hiking/bushwalking) and walking for transport were constructed and reported by person-day. 1318 (9%) and 2879 (20%) of person-days indicated any walking for exercise or transport, respectively. On average, those who reported any time spent walking for exercise accumulated 58.6 ± 49.1 minutes over 1.2 ± 0.5 episodes per person-day. The corresponding value for those who reported any walking for transport was 28.8 ± 26.5 minutes over 2.3 ± 1.4 episodes per person-day. Although walking for exercise produces more accumulated daily minutes of physical activity, walking for transport is more prevalent and alone closely approximates public health recommendations.

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