

WINDSOR-ESSEX WALKS TO SCHOOL

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TOOL



KIT

A Resource for
Parents and Schools

Active & Safe
Routes to School Coalition

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Introduction

You probably have fond memories of walking to school when you were a child. They may include walking with your parents or friends, saying good morning to your favourite crossing guard, or walking in the rain wearing your raincoat and rubber boots. For some people the days of walking to school seem long gone, and driving has become the norm. According to an American study, “in 1969, 48% of students walked or biked to school, while in 2001, less than 15% walked and only 1% biked” (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2003).

The decline in walking to school is a concern for parents. Research shows Canadian children are not active enough. *Canada’s Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth* (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009, p., 24) gives a failing grade for physical activity. In fact, “87% of children and youth are not meeting Canada’s physical activity guidelines”.

Canada’s physical activity guidelines recommend that children and youth be physically active for 90 minutes each day. For good health, children should take part in activities that:

- Work the heart and lungs (e.g., running, walking fast, playing soccer).
- Build strong bones and muscles (e.g., climbing on playground equipment, shoveling snow, playing catch).
- Increase flexibility (e.g., yoga, stretching, martial arts).

The good news is that walking to and from school is a great way for children to build activity into their day. The purpose of this resource is to provide parents with information on things they can do to get children walking to and from school. This resource is divided into two sections:

Section one provides an overview of:

- The importance of physical activity for children.
- Recommendations for physical activity in children.
- Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS).
- Active and Safe Routes to School pilot project.

Section two provides an overview of:

- Common barriers to walking to school.
- Possible solutions to the barriers of walking to school.
- How to start a formal walking program, such as ASRTS.

Section One

The importance of physical activity for children

Regular physical activity helps:

- Build strong bones and muscles.
- Strengthen the heart.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Improve fitness.

Research shows regular physical activity:

- Improves self-esteem.
- Increases learning/academic performance in areas such as attention span, problem- solving skills and concentration.
- Helps establish positive habits that can carry over to adulthood.

Recommendations for physical activity in children

It is recommended that children and youth participate in at least 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day. Moderate activity includes:

- Brisk walking
- Skating
- Swimming
- Bike riding
- Playing outdoors

Vigorous activity includes:

- Running
- Playing basketball
- Playing soccer (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002)

Activities might be organized (e.g., team sports) or unstructured play (e.g., tag).

What is Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS)?

ASRTS started in Canada in the 1990s. The goal is to encourage children and parents to use active transportation like walking or biking when going to and from school, or at school. (This resource and our pilot project, discussed later, focuses on walking only).

ASRTS promotes safe routes, so children and youth can be more active before, during, and after school. To encourage walking, the ASRTS program helps to ensure that supports such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and signs are in place.

Why is ASRTS important?

- ASRTS gets children active and builds physical activity into their day.
- Parents can teach children pedestrian safety rules while walking. Children can practice these skills with an adult present. This helps prepare children for independent walking as they get older. (See Section 2 for links to safety rules.)
- Children who walk to school appear to be more alert, so they are ready to learn. In a survey conducted in the United Kingdom, “9 out of 10 teachers consider that the walk to school actually makes children brighter, more alert and ready for the first class of the day”(Green Communities, 2004, 16).
- If more children walked fewer cars would be on the road and around the school. This change can make it safer for students traveling to and from school. It can also help reduce air pollution.
- Children can make new friends, enjoy time with family, and get to know their neighbourhood by walking.

ASRTS has many looks

Below are few of the various ASRTS activities. Schools can use one or a number of the following:

- **International Walk To School Day (IWALK)**
IWALK takes place once a year in October. The goal of IWALK is to increase the number of students who walk to and from school on a specific day. For more information about IWALK go to www.iwalktoschool.org
- **Walking School Bus**
Students who live in the same neighbourhood walk to and from school together. A volunteer, such as a parent, walks with students. Volunteers can take turns on different days of the week.
- **Moving Mondays, Touring Tuesdays, Walking Wednesdays, Trekking Thursdays, Phys. Ed. Fridays**

The goal is to pick a day per month or per week as a “Walk to School Day”. On this day, students are encouraged to walk. Schools can use the names above or come up with their own names.

- **Winter Walk Day**

Organize a walk to school day during the winter, or walk to a local skating rink, or hold a winter carnival in the school yard during lunch. Wednesday, February 11, 2009 was Ontario’s first Winter Walk Day.

For more information on these activities and others, go to

<http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/programs.asp>

Even children who are bused to school can build walking into their school day.

Try these ideas:

Walking Challenge/ Kilometre Club

At lunch, recess, or before classes start, students and teachers walk around the school yard. The gym or hallways can be used on bad weather days. Students can measure the distance of their walking area, so they can track how far they’ve walked or how many times they need to walk around the area to complete one km or one mile.

Walk Across Canada Challenge

The aim is for students, teachers, and parents to track the number of footsteps over a certain time period. Students virtually travel from one end of the country to the other. A map is used to track the school’s progress. Go to www.wechealthunit.org and enter *Walk Across Canada Teaching Kit* in the search box to look at this resource.

For more information on ASRTS walking programs, check out the Active Safe Routes to School website www.saferoutestoschool.ca

Active and Safe Routes to School pilot project in Windsor-Essex County

An ASRTS Coalition was formed in January 2008. Coalition representation includes the following agencies:

- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit
- Heart and Stroke Foundation
- School Boards
- Teen Health Centre
- New Beginnings
- Sandwich Community Health Centre
- City of Windsor
- Municipality of Kingsville

- Municipality of Essex
- Municipality of Amherstburg
- Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)

The pilot project was funded for two years by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, through a Community Action grant. Funding ends December 2009.

The ASRTS coalition's goal is to increase physical activity among elementary school students. The coalition works with schools and parents to:

- Identify barriers that prevent walking to and from school.
- Involve decision makers (e.g., municipal councilors, school boards and school personnel) to address the supports needed for students to walk safely to and from school. Supports may include sidewalks, signage, crossing guards, crosswalks, traffic signs, and supervision.

During 2008/09, the ASRTS coalition held community forums at eight pilot site elementary schools:

- **Holy Name Catholic School**
- **Princess Elizabeth Public School**
- **Forest Glade Public School**
- **Hugh Beaton Public School**
- **Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School**
- **St. John de Brebeuf Catholic School**
- **École L'Envolée**
- **École St. Jean Baptiste.**

The purpose of these community forums was to discuss with parents and school members how ASRTS could be implemented in their schools.

For more information on how to get children more active, check out the homepage for Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/index.html

Section Two

This section offers suggestions on how parents can address common barriers to walking to and from school. There are two parts:

1. **An informal program** for parents who want their children to walk to school but who are not interested in a structured walking program.
2. **A formal program** for parents who want to start a structured walking program at their children’s school.

Informal Program

If you want your children to walk to and from school, but you are not looking to start a formal program, keep reading.

The first thing to do is ask yourself the following question:

What are the barriers that prevent my child from walking to and from school?

The following chart outlines some common barriers and possible solutions.

Common barriers and possible solutions to walking to school

Common Barriers	Possible Solutions	Who to Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidewalk conditions (e.g., snow covered, cracked pavement, items blocking your view such as poles, signs, shrubs, dumpsters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shovel ice and snow from the sidewalk in front of your home and the sidewalk adjacent to any alley-ways. • Contact your local municipality if you have any questions on snow and ice removal. • Keep sidewalks free of clutter. 	<p>City of Windsor Call: 311 www.citywindsor.ca</p> <p>Amherstburg Call: 519-736-0012 www.amherstburg.ca</p> <p>Essex Call: 519-776-7336 www.townofessex.on.ca</p> <p>Kingsville Call: 519-733-2305 www.kingsville.ca</p> <p>Lakeshore Call: 519-728-2700 www.lakeshore.ca</p>



LaSalle
 Call: 519-969-7770
www.town.lasalle.on.ca

Leamington
 Call: 519-326-5761
www.leamington.ca

Tecumseh
 Call: 519-735-2184
www.tecumseh.ca

- Weather conditions

- Children can walk to and from school in all types of weather. Wearing the proper gear is important.



The *Coats for Kids Program* collects coats for children in need. Sizes range from infant to adult. The program starts in November. Coat distribution sites are located throughout Windsor-Essex County. For more information, contact 211 or go to www.211windsorsex.ca and enter **Coats for Kids** in the find box.

Tips For Walking in All Types of Weather

During hot weather:

- Wear sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. If outdoors for an extended period of time, use SPF 30.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeves, and pants.
- Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays.
- Stay hydrated. Carry a water bottle.

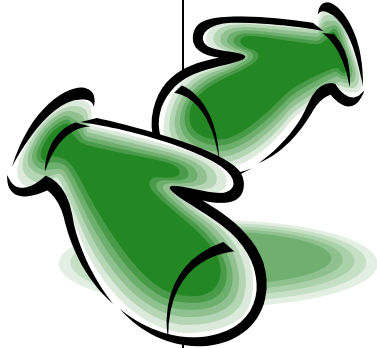

For more information on sun safety, visit <http://www.wherestheshade.ca>


During rainy weather:




- Carry an umbrella.
- Wear a waterproof coat (raincoat) and waterproof shoes/boots.


During cold weather:



- Wear warm, waterproof boots.
- Wear a warm coat.
- Wear a hat and mittens.
- Wear a scarf over face and mouth on very


		<p>cold days. Below -25 °C is too cold to walk to school (Green Communities Canada, 2009).</p> <p>Also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put an extra pair of socks and mittens in your child’s backpack, so wet items can be changed. <p>For more information on how to dress properly during the cold weather, check out the following links:</p> <p>www.safekidscanada.ca</p> <p>Under safety topics, click “winter safety”. Scroll down to clothing for outdoor play.</p> <p>www.smartrisk.ca</p> <p>Enter preventing frostbite and hypothermia in the search box.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy traffic (such as volume) 	<p>Contact your local municipality to find out how to address this issue.</p>	<p>City of Windsor Call: 311 www.citywindsor.ca</p> <p>Amherstburg Call: 519-736-0012 www.amherstburg.ca</p> <p>Essex Call: 519-776-7336 www.townofessex.on.ca</p> <p>Kingsville Call: 519-733-2305 www.kingsville.ca</p> <p>Lakeshore Call: 519-728-2700 www.lakeshore.ca</p> <p>LaSalle Call: 519-969-7770 www.town.lasalle.on.ca</p> <p>Leamington Call: 519-326-5761 www.leamington.ca</p> <p>Tecumseh</p>

		<p>Call: 519-735-2184 www.tecumseh.ca</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speeding, careless or aggressive driving 	<p>Call local police.</p> <p>Most county municipalities are serviced by Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). Also, if on a provincial highway, call OPP. Remember, 911 is for emergency.</p>	<p>Windsor Police Call: 519-258-6111</p> <p>Amherstburg Police Services Call: 519-736-3622</p> <p>Essex OPP Call: 1-888-310-1122 or if using a cell phone dial *opp.</p> <p>Kingsville OPP Call: 1-888-310-1122 or if using a cell phone dial *opp.</p> <p>Lakeshore OPP Call: 1-888-310-1122 or if using a cell phone dial *opp.</p> <p>LaSalle Police Services Call: 519-969-5210</p> <p>Leamington Police Services Call: 519-326-3214</p> <p>Tecumseh OPP Call: 1-888-310-1122 or if using a cell phone dial *opp.</p> <p>For more information on aggressive driving, go to www.wechealthunit.org and enter aggressive driving in the search box.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No sidewalks 	<p>Contact your local municipality to find out how to address this issue.</p>	<p>City of Windsor Call: 311 www.citywindsor.ca</p> <p>Amherstburg Call: 519-736-0012 www.amherstburg.ca</p> <p>Essex Call: 519-776-7336</p>

		<p>www.townofsessex.on.ca</p> <p>Kingsville Call: 519-733-2305 www.kingsville.ca</p> <p>Lakeshore Call: 519-728-2700 www.lakeshore.ca</p> <p>LaSalle Call: 519-969-7770 www.town.lasalle.on.ca</p> <p>Leamington Call: 519-326-5761 www.lemington.ca</p> <p>Tecumseh Call: 519-735-2184 www.tecumseh.ca</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance - too far to walk 	<p>Park your vehicle a little distance away from the school and walk the rest of the way.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of pedestrian safety skills 	<p>Teach your child pedestrian safety skills.</p>	<p><i>KIDestrians</i> is a step-by-step guide to teach children traffic safety rules. The guide has 12 different exercises for parents to use with their children. Go to www.wechealthunit.org and enter KIDestrians in the search box for this resource.</p> <p>Safe Kids Canada Go to www.safekidscanada.ca and under safety topics, click on “pedestrian”.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal safety Children are too young to walk by themselves 	<p>Find a walking buddy or trusted adult who is willing to walk your child. Start a <i>Walking</i></p>	<p>For information on the Walking School Bus, go to www.saferoutestoschool.ca/walkingschoolbus.asp</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent or guardian unable to walk with them. 	<p><i>School Bus Program</i> at your school.</p> <p>Find out if there is a <i>Block Parent Program</i> in your neighborhood or become one.</p> <p>Learn about Neighborhood Watch</p>	<p>Call: 211 www.211windsorsex.ca and enter Block Parents in the find box.</p> <p>Call: 211 www.211windsorsex.ca and enter Neighbourhood Watch in the find box.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of crossing guards 	<p>Contact your local municipality to find out how to address this issue.</p>	<p>City of Windsor Call: 311 www.citywindsor.ca</p> <p>Amherstburg Call: 519-736-0012 www.amherstburg.ca</p> <p>Essex Call: 519-776-7336 www.townofessex.on.ca</p> <p>Kingsville Call: 519-733-2305 www.kingsville.ca</p> <p>Lakeshore Call: 519-728-2700 www.lakeshore.ca</p> <p>LaSalle Call: 519-969-7770 www.town.lasalle.on.ca</p> <p>Leamington Call: 519-326-5761 www.leamington.ca</p> <p>Tecumseh Call: 519-735-2184</p>

		www.tecumseh.ca
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of time in the morning 	<p>Here are a few things you and your child can do the night before to help save time in the morning:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Make lunches Take showers Lay out clothes Pack backpack Check weather report <p>Walking to school takes energy. Make sure your child is getting a proper breakfast.</p> <p>With the time that you save, walk your child to school.</p>	<p>Ideas for healthy lunches for kids: www.wechealthunit.org and enter Healthy Lunches for kids in the search box.</p> <p>Find out the highlights of <i>Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide</i> by taking the Guided Tour. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/tour/index-eng.php</p> <p>It will help you understand how much and what types of foods you need, as well as the benefits of eating well and being active.</p> <p>For breakfast tips for you and your children go to www.healthylivinginfo.ca and enter Feeling Dazed In the Morning? in the search box.</p> <p>Food Banks Call: 211 www.211windsorsex.ca click on 'food' (city and county locations).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bullying 		<p>Contact your school principal or school nurse.</p> <p>Call the school health hotline at 519-258-2146 ext. 1555 or go to www.wechealthunit.org and enter directory of school nurses in the search box.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graffiti 	<p>Contact your local municipality to find out how to address this issue.</p> <p>Also, teach children about respecting property.</p>	<p>City of Windsor Call: 311 www.citywindsor.ca</p> <p>Amherstburg Call: 519-736-0012 www.amherstburg.ca</p> <p>Essex Call: 519-776-7336</p>

	www.townofsessex.on.ca
	<p>Kingsville Call: 519-733-2305 www.kingsville.ca</p>
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	<p>LaSalle Call: 519-969-7770 www.town.lasalle.on.ca</p>
	<p>Leamington Call: 519-326-5761 www.leamington.ca</p>
	<p>Tecumseh Call: 519-735-2184 www.tecumseh.ca</p>

Formal Program

How to start a formal walking program, such as ASRTS

If you want to start a more structured walking program at your children's school, this section is for you.

Step one: Talk it up.

- Talk to your school principal about hosting an ASRTS presentation for interested parents.
- Contact your school's nurse to book a presentation. Call the school health hotline at 519-258-2146 ext. 1555 or go to www.wechealthunit.org and enter directory of school nurses in the search box.

Step Two: Promote the Presentation.

- Copy and paste the sample promotion resources: newsletter insert

Bussed Schools

Do you want to help your child lead a more active lifestyle? Learn how physical activity benefits your child's learning by coming out to an upcoming "Active and Safe Routes to School" forum for parents. The Active & Safe Routes to School program looks at the need for safe neighbourhoods, so children can be more active before, during, and after school. For more information contact your school nurse at 519-258-2146 ext. 1555.

Urban Schools

Do you want to save time, gas, money, and reduce morning hassles? Learn how physical activity benefits your child's learning by coming out to an upcoming "Active and Safe Routes to School" forum for parents. The Active & Safe Routes to School program looks at the need for safe neighbourhoods, so children can be more active before, during, and after school. For more information contact your school nurse at 519-258-2146 ext. 1555.

Step Three: The Presentation

- Your school public health nurse can provide the ASRTS presentation.
- Providing child care and healthy refreshments, and staying on schedule (e.g., starting and ending on time) will contribute to a successful meeting.
- Assign a parent from the group to keep a list of common barriers identified by parents.
- Obtain contact information from interested parents for future meetings and for further information.
- Some options for parents wishing to participate in the program:
 - a. Help with the walkabout (see Step Four below).
 - b. Help map out walking routes to school.
 - c. Serve as a volunteer to walk children to school.

Step Four: Walkability Check

- Now that the barriers have been identified, the next step is to take a walk around your school neighbourhood using a walkability checklist. Here are two options. Select the one you like.

1. WalkON Checklist

www.walkon.ca/type/pedestrian-supports

2. Walkable America Checklist

www.walkableamerica.org/checklist-walkability.pdf

- This checklist will help address the barriers discussed in the presentation and spot others.
- Refer to the previous chart of Common Barriers and Possible Solutions.
- Decide which barriers to work on first. Pick one or two to start. It takes time and energy to make changes, even small ones.
- Find out if there are other groups in your community working on active transportation issues, and, if possible, work with them.

Step Five: Pick your Program

- Once the barrier(s) have been addressed, your school can choose a walking program that meets the needs of students and parents. (Please refer to section one.)

Step Six: Celebrate!

- Acknowledge and celebrate your achievements. Go to www.saferoutestoschool.ca/asrtsrg.asp Chapter 6 - themes and celebrations.

Conclusion

Now that you have an understanding of some common barriers to walking to school and how to overcome them, please feel free to contact your public health nurse for more information. Call 519-258-2146 ext. 1555.

Also, check out the following links to see other Active & Safe Routes to School initiatives around the world.

Green Communities / Active and Safe Routes to School

www.saferoutestoschool.ca

Active & Safe Routes to School in Nova Scotia

www.saferoutesns.ca

Shape Alberta
www.shapeab.com

Way to Go! School Program, British Columbia
www.waytogo.icbc.bc.ca

International Walk to School in the USA
www.walktoschool.org

International Walk to School
www.iwalktoschool.org

Kids Walk-to-School Guide: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S.
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/index.htm

References

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Green Communities Canada. (2004). *A community action resource guide: Active and safe routes to school*. Retrieved January 2008, from <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/asrtsrg.asp>

Health Canada. (2002). *Family guide to physical activity for children*. Ottawa, ON: Queen's Printer.

In Motion. (2006). *Youth do it: Benefits for youth*. Retrieved March 2009, from <http://www.in-motion.ca/youth/benefits>

