



NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT TO BE ACTIVE

Your local environment can make being physically active easier, safer and more enjoyable. With the right environment, opportunities can be created for people to be active as part of their normal daily lives.

These opportunities can be created from changes to daily routine, such as walking to work or to the shops instead of driving. Sometimes changes to the local environment may be necessary to make it easier to be active. For example, is it possible for children to walk to school? Is it possible to cycle to work or use a combination of public transport and cycling? If not, certain features of the environment can be modified to make activity easier.

Studies have shown that physical activity levels increase when there are improvements to local parks and walking tracks. Environments that encourage people to be active can also create a sense of community spirit and increase neighbourhood safety.

Areas that can be modified to enable people to be active

1. *Where people live:*
 - Pathways that are well lit, litter-free, sign posted and shaded;
 - Parks, recreational and sporting facilities that are safe and available for activity;
 - Play equipment, drinking fountains and skateboarding facilities in parks for children and young people; and
 - Childcare available at recreation facilities.
2. *How people move around:*
 - Safe and accessible walking and cycling paths that make it easier for people to walk or cycle for transport;
 - Facilities at public transport interchanges and in workplaces such as bike racks, showers and lockers;
 - Convenient and accessible public transport services;
 - Bus services for people with mobility problems;
 - Safe routes to school for children; and
 - Local amenities and shops that can be easily reached on foot, by bicycle or using public transport.
3. *How people relate to each other:*
 - Clubs and organisations that provide social support for physical activity; and
 - Physical activity at community events such as fun runs and dancing.

What local governments can do

Local governments are the largest providers of sport, recreation and physical activity facilities in Australia. They play an important role in planning and developing the local environment to provide opportunities for people to be more physically active.

Many local governments have already begun to make changes to the environment to enable residents to be more active.

What you can do

There are many ways that Australians can work with their local governments and other organisations to make it easier to be active as part of their daily life. People can start by asking their employers to provide facilities to allow them to walk or cycle to work, such as bike racks or showers. A walking group can be organised for employees wishing to be active in their lunch break.

Arranging for a parent to walk children to and from school each day provides a safe means of transport, reduces traffic congestion around schools and gives both parents and children a chance to be active each day.

For more information about Physical Activity and Health and to obtain a copy of the National Physical Activity Guidelines, please visit the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's Nutrition and Physical Activity website at: <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/active/index.htm>

For more information about Walk to Work Day, please visit the Walk to Work Day website at: www.walk.com.au

