

Media release



30 April 2020

New survey: 40% of Aussies working from home walking less during lockdown

Working from home has become the 'new normal' across Australia, but employees are being warned of the health risks of staying chained to their makeshift desks as new research suggests many are clocking fewer steps than before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

A Heart Foundation survey on how the lockdown has changed Australians' walking habits shows four in 10 (40%) of people now working from home are walking less than usual. This represents a larger group than those workers squeezing in more steps since setting up a home office (34%).

Overall, the poll of almost 300 Australians in April indicates about 30% are walking more than they normally would since COVID-19 restrictions came into effect, yet 25% are walking less – prompting the Heart Foundation to urge everyone to keep moving for the sake of their heart health.

Heart Foundation Group CEO, Adjunct Professor John Kelly, says staying active is crucial throughout this pandemic, and we shouldn't underestimate the many benefits of walking.

"Regular walking is one of the best choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, lower stress and build a healthier body. While it's heartening to see close to one third of Australians are walking more, it's equally concerning that many say they are now walking less," Professor Kelly said.

"With many people now working from home or self-isolating, this can lead to more hours spent sitting in front of screens, in video meetings, or on the couch, and less time moving during the day.

"However, office shutdowns shouldn't mean putting healthy habits on pause. It's still important to keep up your steps and find ways to fit walking into your new routine – it's free, suitable for all ages and fitness levels, and can be done almost anywhere."

As a guide, adults should aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity (the equivalent of a brisk walk) each day.

"You can reduce your risk of heart disease by up to 35% simply by walking 30 minutes a day, so making small, positive changes during this pandemic and beyond can bring big health benefits," Professor Kelly said.

"Keep in mind doing three sessions of 10 minutes is just as beneficial as one 30-minute walk. The key is to move more and sit less, so try to avoid sitting for prolonged periods glued to your computer screen and take regular breaks to move around the house."

Being inactive is a key risk factor for heart disease, which remains the nation's single biggest killer and claims 48 lives each day.

Even before the arrival of COVID-19, most Australians were not active enough for good heart health. Just 15% of adults aged 18-64 meet physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines.

Professor Kelly said while this was a challenging time, it was also an opportunity to take advantage of the 'wonder drug' known as walking.

Walking habits in lockdown

- 31% of Australians are walking more than usual. Of those, 45% take walks by themselves, 32% go with their partner and 24% with their pets.
- Of those who walk more than usual and walk by themselves, 77% indicate they are walking for longer than before COVID-19 restrictions.
- 25% of Australians are walking less than they usually would. Of those, almost 60% are younger than 45.
- Of the 22% of Australians now working from home, 40% of this group are walking less than usual, while 34% are walking more.

Five ways to step it up

- Walk and talk: Boost your steps by walking around while talking on your mobile phone.
- Break it up: If you can't find time for a half hour walk, try breaking it up into 10-minute sessions throughout the day.
- Grocery run: Instead of driving to the supermarket for supplies, try walking instead or park further away from the store and walk part of the way.
- Well timed: Use the time you would have spent commuting to work to go for a morning or afternoon walk or do a workout at home.
- Sit less: Take regular breaks during working hours and use them to walk around the house.

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About the Heart Foundation

The Heart Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fighting the single biggest killer of Australians – heart disease. For 60 years, it has led the battle to save lives and improve the heart health of all Australians. Its sights are set on a world where people don't suffer or die prematurely because of heart disease.

Find out your risk of heart attack or stroke by using our [Heart Age Calculator](#). For heart health information and support, call the Heart Foundation Helpline on 13 11 12. To find out about the Heart Foundation's research program or to make a donation, visit www.heartfoundation.org.au