



Staying physically active is easy: Cycling

Every physical activity counts!

Incorporating physical activity into your daily life by walking, cycling, climbing stairs, or doing housework or gardening – is good for your physical and mental health. The rule of thumb is: any activity is better than none and increases health and well-being at every age.

Cycling...

- increases well-being
- is healthy
- improves the air quality
- protects the environment
- is cheap and silent



Cycling has many advantages

The bicycle is the ideal everyday mode of transport. Not only does it increase well-being and improve your health, it also brings many environmental benefits. Cycling doesn't emit greenhouse gases, which is good for the climate and air quality. Cycling is also silent and thus reduces the noise level, which also benefits the environment as well as personal and societal health.

Whether going to work, shopping or to a private or professional appointment: go by bike, it's an easy way to include physical activity in your daily routine. The even, cyclical movement in the fresh air has a balancing effect, promotes mental well-being, boosts the immune system and improves concentration and memory performance.

Cycling saves time and money

Travelling by bike usually gets you to your destination quicker, and saves you from having to wait, sit in traffic or look for a parking space. You also save on petrol, parking fees, paying for public transport, the gym etc.

Cycling promotes physical and mental health



Cycling works your cardiovascular system and the body's major muscle groups, thus increasing energy consumption. The intensity and extent of energy consumption is defined by the **speed and upward gradient** of your journey.



Good for stress

Exercise helps reduce stress hormones. The even, cyclical movements of cycling have a calming and relaxing effect on the body. Regular cycling in nature as opposed to staying in congested areas is also good for your mental health.



Chart 1: The benefits of cycling (Source: velolab.org/fr/sante).

Cycling: the ideal antidote to a sedentary lifestyle

Do you normally spend a lot of time seated? Do you have no inclination or time for sport or exercise? If so, you should try cycling as it is an easy way to move more. Start with short routes and gradually increase the frequency, duration and intensity of your cycling until it becomes a normal part of your routine and you don't want to give it up.

Every step in the right direction makes a difference and is good for your health, well-being, quality of life and physical capability – whatever your age. Even if you do not (yet) meet the physical activity recommendations, it's still worth starting, as any limitation or punctuation of prolonged sedentary spells by standing up or moving is good for your health.

Physical activity recommendations for adults (18-64)

Taglich empfohlene Bewegung fur Erwachsene (18–64 Jahre)



Langandauerndes Sitzen begrenzen und regelmassig unterbrechen.

Quelle: hepa.ch, Maglingen 2023

The biggest health benefit comes from a minimum of 150 to 300 minutes of endurance-oriented, medium-intensity exercise (e.g. walking or cycling, gardening or housework) or a minimum of 75 to 150 minutes of high-intensity exercise (e.g. jogging, swimming, cross-country skiing, zumba) per week. Besides endurance, you should also do muscle-strengthening exercises of medium or high intensity at least twice per week.

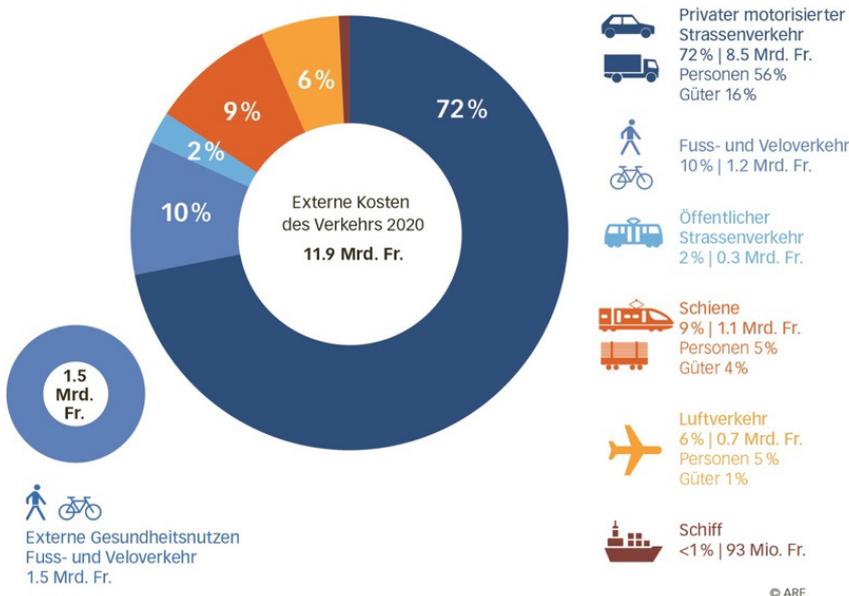
Chart 2: Physical activity recommendations Switzerland, (Source: hepa.ch 2023)

It’s never too late to start pedalling, any activity is better than none!

How come? Regular movement reduces the risk of many non-communicable conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. These illnesses account for almost three-quarters of all fatalities in Switzerland. People who exercise a lot not only build muscle, but also strengthen their bones, joints, organs and immune systems. In addition, they see improvements in their memory, learning ability and quality of sleep. Physical activity also has a positive impact on mental health, social contacts and independence in old age.

Did you know? Pedestrian and bicycle traffic is associated with external health benefits in contrast to the externalities arising from motorised traffic and its concomitant health costs (see Chart 3). If everyone in Switzerland were to spend five minutes per day cycling instead of driving, annual health costs could go down by CHF 2,463 million.

Gesamte externe Kosten und Nutzen des Verkehrs 2020



External benefits are the opposite of externalities: a certain type of mobility creates a benefit that extends beyond the individual road user. Walking is a good example: the physical activity has a positive effect on society as a whole: fewer illnesses leading to more productive employees plus lower healthcare and social insurance costs

Chart 3: External costs and benefits of transport 2020 (Source: Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE)

Active mobility in Switzerland

In 2021, the average time spent on the move on foot or by bike/e-bike was 35.0 minutes per day per person in Switzerland. This figure has remained stable since 2010. The number of stages (1.8/day) and the distance covered (2.6 km/day), however, decreased in the period up to 2021. In 2015, each inhabitant still covered 2.3 stages daily and a distance of 2.8 km on foot or by bike/e-bike every day. That equates to 0.9 km per person and day by bike and e-bike in 2021 (Chart 4)

<https://ind.obsan.admin.ch/en/indicator/monam/active-mobility-on-foot-by-bike-age-6>



Chart 4: Daily distance per person in Switzerland (Source : Mobility and Transport Microcensus, Federal Statistical Office FSO 2021)

Switch from your own bike to a shared one

Do you travel a lot for work and/or in your own time and do you normally spend a lot of time seated? Question the old ways of doing things and try something new: for example, you could use a public rental bike to go to meetings, or work/private events in other towns. That will allow you to conveniently include exercise in the open air in your daily routine plus getting to know other towns and regions.

Have you cycled yet today?

- I cycled today – to school, work, daycare etc.
- I made a conscious decision today to travel by bike instead of by car or public transport.
- I cycled a bit faster today and it made me short of breath.
- I tell other people about how much I enjoy cycling as part of my daily routine and the many ways in which it benefits my health and the environment.
- I participate in a cycling promotion scheme, for example bike to work.

Safe cycling – the 5 key tips

Source: Swiss Council for Accident Prevention BFU, www.bfu.ch/de/ratgeber/velo-fahren

- Be cautious and think ahead
- Make yourself visible – including during the day
- Wear a snug-fitting helmet
- Stay in the middle of the lane at roundabouts
- Equip your bike properly

Further information and projects on the theme of cycling

- [Bike2school](#), Pro Velo Switzerland (in French, German and Italian)
- [Bike to work](#), Pro Velo Switzerland
- [DEFI VELO](#), promoting cycling among 13-20 year olds (in French and German)
- [Pro Velo Switzerland](#), umbrella organisation representing the interests of cyclists in Switzerland
- [Sicher Velo fahren](#), Swiss Council for Accident Prevention BFU (in French, German and Italian)
- [VeloLab](#), (in French and German) inc. video on [Cycling, health & climate \(in German\)](#)
- [Cycling in Switzerland](#), SwitzerlandMobility

Sources

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These recommendations for daily physical activity were developed by the FOPH as part of the implementation of the NCD strategy (with the support of the Federal Office of Public Health, Health Promotion Switzerland and the Swiss Conference of Health Directors).

Federal Office of Public Health FOPH
Prevention of Non-communicable diseases Division

November 2024

