

KINECTED: Cycling a great way to exercise

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Kinected
Kerry Senchyna

— *Image Credit:*

Riding a bicycle is one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to exercise.

In some ways, it's like walking – the only cost involved is a pair of good shoes, or in the case of cycling, a reliable bicycle and helmet.

Cycling can be done almost anywhere, at almost any time of the year, and with little outlay of cash.

For those who do not enjoy sports because of the high level of skill required, the lack of opportunity, or perhaps because they don't enjoy the competitiveness of sport, cycling is a great way to exercise.

Most of us know how to cycle, and once you have learned, you don't forget.

In Copenhagen, Denmark, more than a third of the population uses a bicycle instead of a car, and there are plans for promoting this trend so that 50 per cent of citizens trade in their car for a bicycle by 2015.

The population of baby-boomers in Canada is finding cycling a great way to exercise as mobility in the knees and hips become problematic with aging.

Spinning classes in the gym and recreational cycling are also viable exercise options for many.

A new study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine found that commuters who drive to work gain more weight than those who use what's called 'active transport', meaning self-powered propulsion, such as cycling and walking.

The Australian researchers completed a four-year study of more than 800 adults, and found that daily car commuters gained the most weight, while occasional drivers or those who never drove gained less weight.

Daily drivers gained on average three pounds more than non-car commuters even though they participated in a daily exercise or gym routine.

The only group in the study who did not gain weight at all were 'active transport' commuters, who also engaged in the recommended levels of exercise at the gym or with recreation.

It may be that the recommended three to five hours of exercise each week is still difficult for many people to achieve, so combining recreation and active transport may allow people to attain or surpass this level.

The problem at the moment is there still are substantial limitations to cycling in the city. There is still a need for more cycle-lane access and infrastructure changes. Traffic congestion, lack of sidewalks or protected bike paths for safe travel has been a constant concern.

One stark issue is the lack of bike-racks at supermarkets and workplaces. It's fine to cycle to work or shop, but if there is nowhere to park and safely lock your bicycle, it is a real impediment to incorporating bicycles into your lifestyle.

In Europe, it is not uncommon to find bike-racks in public and commercial spaces which can accommodate a hundred bikes or more.

And as far as theft goes, there are a number of innovative measures put in place in Europe, including the use of devices to enable remote tracking of a bicycle's location and registration of bicycles to enable recovery if stolen.

To date, we have made some progress in bike promotion for the public, but we still have a long, winding road ahead.

Kerry Senchyna holds a bachelor of science degree in kinesiology and is owner of West Coast Kinesiology in Maple Ridge.