

## The benefits of walking around your neighborhood



Good morning! Did you get up and take a walk today?

Well, if you live in a neighborhood where you can easily walk to nearby shops, you are likely to be more active and thinner than if you live in a place where you have to drive everywhere, a new study shows. This is true no matter what income level the neighborhood.

“Walkable neighborhoods seem to be healthier for both lower-income and higher-income people,” says lead

researcher Jim Sallis, director of the Active Living Research Program at San Diego State University.

Researchers looked at 32 neighborhoods in Seattle and Baltimore, based on income and walkability factors. About 2,200 people, ages 20 to 65, wore accelerometers to track moderate to vigorous physical activity. They also filled out assessments to measure their mental and physical quality of life. Findings were reported in the March issue of *Social Science & Medicine*:

People did 40 to 50 minutes more physical activity per week if their neighborhoods were designed for pedestrians, regardless of whether they lived in higher-income or lower-income neighborhoods.

Participants were less likely to be overweight or obese if they lived in places that were friendly to walking.

People did not rate their quality of life any better if they lived in a highly walkable neighborhood, but they did if they lived in a high-income area.

“Walkability did not seem to help all aspects of health, but living in a walkable neighborhood could help combat inactivity and obesity, two of our biggest health challenges,” Sallis says.