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## **5 big health benefits from cycling you need to know about**



Asian Development Bank

Professional cycling reaches a peak in the northern hemisphere summer with major races like the Tour de France. Not many of us will be racing hundreds of kilometres a day, up and down mountains and across plains, to earn the coveted Yellow Jersey awarded to Tour leaders but there are still many good reasons to start cycling today. Here are just five:

### 1. Cyclists live longer

On average, Tour de France riders lived eight years longer than the average person in their home countries, according to researchers at the [University of Valencia](#) [1].

Other studies have reported good news about average cyclists. Scientists who looked at the sporting background and lifespan of 80,306 British adults found that cyclists were [15 per cent less likely to die from any cause](#) [2]. According to the World Health Organization, [cycling for 20 minutes on most days](#) [3] reduces the risk of dying by at least 10 per cent.

### 2. Cycling cuts pollution and global warming

Cycle commuting cuts the number of vehicle trips resulting in fewer greenhouse gas emissions. This helps to reduce global warming. Emissions per kilometre are at least thirty times lower for cycling than driving and about ten times lower than for an electric car, according to the [WHO](#) [3].

Fewer vehicle emissions also means less air pollution, which is responsible for more than [7 million deaths globally each year](#) [4]. Air pollution is also a leading risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as stroke, heart disease and lung cancer.

### 3. Cycling saves you money

A recent study found that all expenses considered, from purchase through maintenance to insurance, a bicycle costs about \$3 per 100 km travelled; a private car is six times more expensive at [roughly \\$18 per 100km](#) [5].

If time is money, cycling also saves. In Mexico City, for example, cycle lanes save users [11.5 minutes and 5.40 pesos per trip](#). [6]

### 4. Cycling cuts your risk of developing chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease

One study of more than [260,000 adults](#) [7] compared commuters who walked, cycled and used 'non-active transport'. It found that cycling "was associated with a lower risk of cardio-vascular disease (CVD), cancer, and all causes of mortality. Walking was linked with a lower risk of CVD.

A 20-year Danish study published in 2016 looked at 45,000 adults and found that riding a bike regularly for commuting or recreation [lowered the risk of heart attack by 11-18 per cent](#). [8]

Physical inactivity in general is an established risk factor for [premature mortality and several NCDs](#) [9]. It is estimated to cause 6-10 per cent of the cases of premature mortality, coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and breast cancer and colon cancer globally. It is also closely linked to obesity.

### 5. Cycling is good for business

A London study found that business areas that improved facilities for [walking and cycling](#) [10] saw retail spending rise up to 30 per cent. Installing cycle parking resulted in five times more spending per square metre than vehicle parking. For every square metre of parking space, customers who cycled generated 7,500 euros compared to 6,250 from car drivers, according to another study.

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- [1] [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fabian-Sanchis-Gomar/publication/51170518\\_Increased\\_Average\\_Longevity\\_among\\_the\\_Tour\\_de\\_France\\_Cyclists/links/54c29f0c0cf256ed5a8eff27/Increased-Average-Longevity-among-the-Tour-de-France-Cyclists.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fabian-Sanchis-Gomar/publication/51170518_Increased_Average_Longevity_among_the_Tour_de_France_Cyclists/links/54c29f0c0cf256ed5a8eff27/Increased-Average-Longevity-among-the-Tour-de-France-Cyclists.pdf)
- [2] <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/51/10/812>
- [3] [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Brand-3/publication/361336226\\_Walking\\_and\\_cycling\\_latest\\_evidence\\_to\\_support\\_policy-making\\_and\\_practice/links/62ab302e40d84c1401af4173/Walking-and-cycling-latest-evidence-to-support-policy-making-and-practice.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Brand-3/publication/361336226_Walking_and_cycling_latest_evidence_to_support_policy-making_and_practice/links/62ab302e40d84c1401af4173/Walking-and-cycling-latest-evidence-to-support-policy-making-and-practice.pdf?origin=publication_detail)
- [4] <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/clean-air-now>
- [5] <https://www.itdp.org/publication/economics-of-cycling/>
- [6] [https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Making-the-Economic-Case-for-Cycling\\_6-13-22.pdf](https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Making-the-Economic-Case-for-Cycling_6-13-22.pdf)
- [7] [https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1456?int\\_source=trendmd&int\\_medium=trendmd&int\\_campaign=trendmd](https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1456?int_source=trendmd&int_medium=trendmd&int_campaign=trendmd)
- [8] <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.116.024651>
- [9] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/risk-factors-prevention/physical-inactivity>
- [10] <https://content.tfl.gov.uk/walking-cycling-economic-benefits-summary-pack.pdf>
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