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For immediate release

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FITTEST CHILDREN CYCLE TO SCHOOL, SAYS NEW RESEARCH

Walking also leads to significant cardiovascular improvements

INDIANAPOLIS – Children who cycle to school are more physically active and fit than those who use other modes of transport, according to new research from the official journal of the [American College of Sports Medicine](#).

The findings are based a study of 6,000 children, ages 10 to 16, from the eastern region of England. The children's cardiorespiratory fitness and travel habits were assessed during 2007 and 2008.

Students from 23 schools completed a school-travel questionnaire and completed a 20-meter shuttle-run test (a speed and agility exercise) to assess their fitness levels. Researchers found boys who walked to school were 20 percent more likely to be fit compared with those using motorized transport such as bus and automobiles, and girls who walked were 30 percent more likely to be fit.

Boys who cycled to school were 30 percent more likely to be fit, but there was an even more dramatic difference in fitness among female subjects. Girls who biked to school were seven times more likely to reach the minimum fitness standard than girls who used motorized transport.

In all cases, children who were driven to school had the lowest levels of physical fitness, being less fit than walkers, cyclists and even children who took the bus. Cyclists were also found to be more physically active at other times of day when compared to children using other transport modes.

Although cyclists and car users were most different in terms of physical fitness, the distances they travelled to school were very similar. Cyclists rode for about 1.5 miles to school, and average car rides were about two miles. Half of these car journeys were less than two miles and 15 percent were less than a mile – both easily walkable or bikeable distances.

Lead researchers Gavin Sandercock, Ph.D., and Christine Voss, M.Sc., said active transportation can be a gateway for lifelong fitness in children.

"Children need to be active and stay fit in order to stay healthy. Encouraging them to walk or cycle to school is one great opportunity to help achieve this," Voss said.

ACSM supports the federal Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, which recommend at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day for children.

The American College of Sports Medicine is the largest sports medicine and exercise science organization in the world. More than 35,000 international, national, and regional members and certified professionals are dedicated to advancing and integrating scientific research to provide educational and practical applications of exercise science and sports medicine.

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NOTE: *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*® is the official journal of the American College of Sports Medicine, and is available from Lippincott Williams & Wilkins at 1-800-638-6423. For a complete copy of the research paper (Vol. 42, No. 2, pages 281-287) or to speak with a leading sports medicine expert on the topic, contact the Department of Communications and Public Information at 317-637-9200 ext. 127 or 133. Visit ACSM online at www.acsm.org.

The conclusions outlined in this news release are those of the researchers only, and should not be construed as an official statement of the American College of Sports Medicine.

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