



MEDIA RELEASE

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VICTORIAN FAMILIES INVITED TO ENTER WALK TO SCHOOL 2012

Registrations are now open for this year's [Walk to School](#) challenge – with the opportunity to win fantastic prizes.

Now in its seventh year, *Walk to School* aims to raise awareness of the need for children to make walking part of their daily routine to improve fitness, friendships, the environment and their confidence.

Only one in five Victorian kids walk to school regularly – 50 per cent below 1970 levels – in an age when childhood obesity is rising to epidemic levels.

VicHealth's *Walk to School* 2012 campaign aims to tackle this worrying trend by encouraging Victorian primary students to walk to school with their parents this October, with some healthy competition thrown in as well. Today, a new *Walk to School* [iPhone app](#) has been released to help families and teachers keep track of how far, and how often, kids have walked.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the children who take part will be building healthy habits and relationships for life and could win some great prizes for their school.

“This year’s Walk to School program will run throughout the entire month of October, after positive feedback from schools, parents and children made it clear there’s an appetite to walk to school more often, and to keep on walking for life,” Ms Rechter said.

“Last year around 60,000 students from 380 primary schools took part in Walk to School Day, which was a brilliant result. This year, we’ve upped the ante and challenge children to start walking to and from school on 8 October – the first day of term four – and keep it up for each of the 18 school days that month.

“October’s a brilliant time to start walking, because Victoria’s fabulous spring sunshine makes it a pleasure to get out of the house, and the car.”

Ms Rechter said parents’ concerns about letting kids walk to school, such as perceptions of stranger danger, traffic concerns and neighbourhood crime, fall away when parents walk with their children, teach them about walking safely, and allow them to gain confidence in their road sense.

“It’s also a fantastic way to connect with your kids. Walking time is talking time for parents and children. When the stress of keeping one eye on the traffic is taken away, it’s easier to talk to your children about what’s happening at school and in their lives,” she said.

“Parents also tell me that walking with their kids gives them a moment to relax and enjoy the air together, and de-stress after a busy morning of before-school chores or a hectic day at work.”

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Victorian child and adolescent psychologist Dr Michael Carr-Gregg says VicHealth's *Walk to School* is an exceptional program which encourages families to get into a new, healthy routine.

"The many benefits from walking include the development of motor skills, an increase in coping skills, self-esteem and social skills which are very important, particularly in children's developmental years," he said.

"Walking every day will help students build a walking habit that's good for them, good for their families and better for the environment."

About Walk to School October 2012

[Registering for Walk to School](#) is FREE and open to primary school students, parents and teachers in Victoria.

VicHealth has created an iPhone app to make it easier for families and students to record their walking activity on the go. Get it at: <http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/walk-to-school/id560956499?mt=8>

Check out the Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/WalkToSchool

Children who record their activity online and enter weekly Walk to School competitions will receive certificates and the chance to win prizes including Clarks Shoes vouchers and family passes to the YMCA, Melbourne Museum and the National Sports Museum. They can also help their school win a mobile *Play for Life* pod visit for a day.

Why walk? See [the FAQ here](#).

To learn more visit: www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au