

MEDIA RELEASE

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VicHealth encourages families to get active on way to school as restrictions lift*Survey shows households with kids walking, riding more in lockdown*

As primary school kids in metro Melbourne join their regional peers in heading back to the classroom, AFL great Cameron Mooney and VicHealth are encouraging families in getting active on their commute with Walk to School 2020.

This comes as new findings from a VicHealth survey shows more than 1 in 4 Victorian households with kids have been doing more walking or bike riding during the pandemic than they did in January and February this year¹.

Cameron Mooney, a former Geelong and North Melbourne forward, said regular walks and bike rides have helped his family stay well in lockdown.

“In lockdown my wife, kids and I got into a healthy routine of getting out most days for walks or bike rides in between remote classes. It’s been nice to spend quality time together and get outside of the house,” Mooney said.

“Now that the kids are back in the classroom, we’re trying to keep up the routine by walking or riding to school with some families who live nearby. It’s really important for them to enjoy the benefits of regular exercise from an early age.”

VicHealth Executive Manager Programs Group Kirstan Corben said getting active on the way to school has many benefits, especially during the pandemic.

“This year has been an incredibly challenging time for Victorians, but a silver lining has been to see so many families walking and riding around their neighbourhoods during lockdown,” Ms Corben said.

“Walking, riding, scooting or skating to school has enormous benefits for our kids’ physical health, but it also helps build confidence, independence and improve road safety skills.

“Travelling by bike or foot can also help ease traffic on our roads and near schools, which is important for keeping the roads safe and to help with physical distancing.

“With the weather warming up and many parents working from home, it’s an ideal time to make physical activity part of the term 4 routine.”

Minister for Roads and Road Safety Ben Carroll congratulated Victorian families for doing more walking or bike riding as we all grapple with the challenges of the pandemic.

“Families doing more walking or bike riding with their kids is incredibly encouraging and important as we know developing active habits young helps set children up for healthier, happier lives,” he said.

“With primary school kids returning to the classroom soon I hope these efforts grow even further with school communities across Victoria walking, riding or scooting to school.”

About Walk to School 2020

VicHealth's Walk to School program is once again teaming up with the AFL Players' Association to help more Victorian kids to walk, ride, scoot or skate to school and build healthy habits for life.

VicHealth has created fun new worksheets with activities to make it easier for families get active and explore their local areas, even in lockdown. Download the worksheets at www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au/

Tips to make walking and riding your child's fave way to travel

- **Teach road safety:** With less traffic on the roads, now is a great time to teach your kids about road safety and build their confidence around walking/scooting/riding.
- **Learn new protocols:** Your school may have different drop off times and locations for different year levels to help with physical distancing.
- **Take it in turns:** Many other parents in your school community will be working from home right now, so why not take it in turns to walk/ride/scoot/skate to school with the kids?
- **Part way is OK!** If the walk to school is too far, you can park a few blocks from the school and walk the rest of the way.
- **Build independence slowly:** Let your child do things gradually. Start by parking the car a few blocks from school and let them walk the rest of the way by themselves, or arrange for them to walk with friends or neighbours.
- **Make a plan:** Teach your child strategies for when things go wrong, such as getting lost, if a stranger approaches them, or if they or their friend gets injured.

For more tips, head to www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au/wts-newsarticles/news/active-travel-tips

Also check out the Ride2School website and download the HandsUp! app for tips on how to get more students active on their journey to school each day www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/rides-and-events/ride2school/

ⁱ VicHealth polled 1,000 Victorians about their attitudes and behaviours towards travel before and during coronavirus, and when restrictions eventually lift. The community feedback was collected in June 2020 via an online survey.