

About Urbanwalks

What is Urbanwalks?

Urbanwalks is a simple but effective concept designed to help people be more habitually active in their everyday local environments.

The patented design of the Urbanwalks leaflet uses a repeatable and uniquely branded format that promotes a cluster of local walks. The format encourages its application across a wide range of environments both urban and rural, and across sectors to allow for a variety of community interventions. Physical inactivity is now recognised as a significant problem and increasing burden to society as a whole.

Inactive individuals are at twice the risk of coronary heart disease compared to active individuals. Walking is fast becoming accepted as the best method to achieve a population level change in levels of physical activity.

Most people know the message – **activity is good for them** – but what has been lacking is a mechanism to empower them to achieve the current minimum recommended levels of activity.

The Urbanwalks range has been designed to tackle the common barriers to habitual activity and provides a branded and unique one-stop-shop approach to the design, marketing, and production of support material for activity promotion.

The Aims of Urbanwalks

- To offer habitual opportunities for bite-sized chunks of activity within the local environment to the widest range of the population possible, including hard to reach groups.
- To provide a national and internationally recognised brand and format that will help towards achieving the objectives laid out in the Government's Game Plan report* i.e. supporting a population shift in physical activity via local promotion.
- To work with partners ensuring an evidence-based approach is maintained with the continued evolution of the Urbanwalks brand.
- To get the nation active and become established as a market leader.

* DCMS / Strategy Unit. Game Plan: a strategy for delivering Government's sport and physical activity objectives (2002). The Stationary Office, London.

The Benefits of Using Urbanwalks

We can offer a unique one-stop-shop facility including:

- Planning, mapping and writing of text for all your routes
- All design and artwork of Urbanwalks leaflets and support material
- Professional print, finish and delivery of all leaflets

Full support service including:

- Consultancy service around all aspects of activity policy and practice
- Follow-up evaluation of Urbanwalks leaflets
- Staff and community training and development programmes
- Extensive design and print services for all your needs
- Other urban exercise promotional material

Evidence Base for Urbanwalks

The current adult recommendation for activity is that significant health benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity (e.g. 30 minutes of brisk walking, 15 minutes of running) on most, if not all, days of the week.

Alarming, only about 37% of men and 25% of women currently achieve the recommended levels of activity. There is also a steady decline in activity levels with advancing age and marked differences between genders, and certain social and ethnic groups.

The scale of inactivity across the population, combined with its impact as a significant risk factor for a variety of diseases means that it is now recognised as a major health and social burden.

Large-scale epidemiological studies have shown that the greatest potential health gain is found when the most sedentary people become just moderately active. The health gains cover a broad spectrum, incorporating both physiological and psychological factors. This potential has seen physical activity labelled a 'best buy for public health medicine'.

However, individual approaches do little to influence the societal conditions that may have contributed to the condition. Evidence is mounting to place much more emphasis on the social and environmental origins of diseases like coronary heart disease and cancers.

The cost of not reacting to this inexorable rise of inactivity and its wider consequences has been estimated to be **£8.2 billion** per annum in England (*CMO's report, 2004). Coupled with projections over the rapid increase in Type II diabetes, the human and economic costs of this sedentary epidemic are only just being fully appreciated and point to the need for urgent action to reverse the trends.

* Department of Health, 2004. At Least five a week. Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health. A report from the Chief Medical Officer. Department of Health Publications.