

# OPEN STREETS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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## What are Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs?

'Open Streets' programs temporarily open selected streets to people by closing them to cars on. By doing this, the streets become places where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can come out and improve their health.

With well-planned routes, health-focused activity hubs, and frequently occurring program dates Open Streets programs have the power to change a city's culture of health. We call this kind of Open Streets program 'Healthiest Practice Open Streets'. By participating in Healthiest Practice Open Streets regularly, people can begin to change their habits and a city can change its culture of health.

This fact sheet is part of a series to promote the benefits of Healthiest Practice Open Streets programs. Find them all at [www.healthiestpracticeopenstreets.org](http://www.healthiestpracticeopenstreets.org)

## Open Streets and Physical Activity

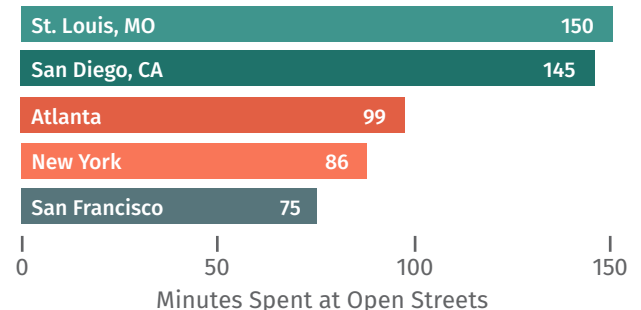
By repurposing public assets—our streets—and opening them up to people, Open Streets programs emphasize active enjoyment in our communities. They also help to normalize active transportation, such as biking and walking, which has potential to increase everyday physical activity. Given this emphasis, Open Streets programs can benefit participants' health and wellbeing.

Physical activity indicators from Open Streets programs around the world demonstrate that they work to get people moving. Participation provides the majority of adults with the recommended number of minutes of physical activity for the day. For some individuals a day at Open Streets can provide the recommended minutes of physical activity for one week. Participant surveys also highlight that, in the absence of Open Streets programs, many would otherwise be engaged in sedentary behaviors.<sup>3,4</sup>

Clearly, Open Streets programs fill a gap in the spectrum of available physical activity efforts, creating a space that is free, entertaining, and available to all.

### Physical Activity: By the Numbers

- **97%** of participants met the recommended 30 minutes of daily physical activity (PA)<sup>1</sup>
- **39%** of participants met the recommended 150 minutes of weekly PA, in just one day<sup>1</sup>
- **71%** of programs in North and South America include PA classes at a hub location<sup>2</sup>
- **89%** of events link routes to existing parks, greenways, and trails<sup>2</sup>



## Necessary Considerations

Open Streets initiatives are one way to combat preventable chronic conditions, in a way that emphasizes community engagement and enjoyment of existing, and often underutilized, municipal infrastructure. If implemented regularly, Open Streets could increase rates of physical activity in communities at a relatively low cost to cities. With regular implementation, the health impact of Open Streets programs can increase with the following considerations:

### Expanding routes increase opportunities for physical activity.

Planning longer routes ensures that adult participants have access to the distance needed to meet physical activity recommendations when walking or biking, and can also increase attendance by bringing recreation directly to people's doorsteps.<sup>5,6</sup>

### Fostering equitable access for all community members.

Intentionally routing Open Streets programs through communities most impacted by chronic health conditions can ensure that low-cost opportunities for physical activity exist for all. Even when the routes are equitably selected, adequate and culturally appropriate outreach and messaging are necessary to engage diverse communities.<sup>3</sup>

Providing bike rentals and bicycle safety classes to communities at no or low cost helps improve access to those without their own equipment and can increase participation and inclusiveness of Open Streets programs.<sup>7</sup>

### Coordinate a mix of activities that are attractive to all participants.

Providing access to other activities, including structured and unstructured, allow participants with different physical activity preferences to engage in the program. Options to maximize participation include linking routes to parks and basketball courts, providing instructor-led classes like yoga and Zumba®, and providing mile markers for runners and cyclists to track their distance.<sup>6</sup>

### Engaging the right partners.

Health and physical activity experts can create the most engaging and effective hub activities, while business associations, urban planners, local community partners, policymakers and other key stakeholders can help to develop and sustain a program that suits their own city most appropriately.<sup>2,8</sup>



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## Citations for graph

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