



Walk Across Texas!

<http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/>

Walk Across Texas! is an eight week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. Walk Across Texas is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

The Issue

- ◆ 25 percent of Texans are obese.
- ◆ 25 percent of children are obese.
- ◆ Only 25 percent of adults and 27 percent of high school students get regular, moderate exercise.
- ◆ 29 percent of American adults are not physically active at all.

Background

- ◆ Regular physical activity is associated with a longer, healthier life.
- ◆ Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the incidence and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and depression.
- ◆ Regular physical activity is also associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits, and medications.
- ◆ Chronic diseases account for 70 percent of deaths and 75 percent of U.S. health-care costs each year.
- ◆ Estimated direct costs of obesity and inactivity together account for approximately 9.4 percent of U.S. health expenditures.
- ◆ With regular physical activity, 58 percent of people with pre-diabetes were able to temporarily or permanently delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.
- ◆ Community-wide programs like Walk Across Texas! have been strongly associated with significant increases in physical activity.

The Educational Program

Teams of eight people, school classes, or individuals walk 830 miles for eight weeks across a map of Texas.

- ◆ Visit <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu>.
- ◆ The program begins by an Extension agent forming a community task force with members from targeted groups such as schools, worksites, churches, etc.
- ◆ Plan Kick-Off, Half-Way, and Recognition activities.
- ◆ Train site managers, captains, teachers, and other volunteer helpers.
- ◆ Register participants.
- ◆ Walk for eight weeks.
- ◆ Enter mileage.
- ◆ Provide recognition for the team walking the most miles and the team reaching the “destination” (830 miles) first.

Impact of Walk Across Texas!

This program significantly increases participant physical activity.

- ◆ 79 Texas counties participated in 2006.
- ◆ 14,525 people registered.
- ◆ 11,122 people finished the eight weeks.
- ◆ 5,568 youth participated in school teams.
- ◆ At least 10 other state Extensions have adapted this program for their residents.
- ◆ Fifty percent of participants report feeling decreased stress after participating.
- ◆ If the 11,122 participants completing the eight-week program continue walking at the same level as during Walk Across Texas!, they have the potential to save a collective \$140.3 million in future health care costs by avoiding type 2 diabetes and by reducing work absences.

Comparison Week 1 to Week 8 Individual Mileage			
Year	Week 1	Week 8	Mean Difference
1999	10.7 mi	12.1 mi	1.4 mi
2000	10.7 mi	12.7 mi	2.0 mi
2001	10.1 mi	11.4 mi	1.3 mi
2003	13.2 mi	14.9 mi	1.8 mi
2004	15.7 mi	17.5 mi	1.8 mi
2005	16.9 mi	19.3 mi	2.34 mi
2006	19.5 mi	23.3 mi	3.8 mi

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Added Individual and Community Benefits

- ◆ Additionally, participants should experience reduced incidence, severity, and health-care costs of other chronic diseases that are also linked to overweight and inactivity.
- ◆ Publicity for Walk Across Texas! competitions and related community events creates public awareness and promotes individual action to increase activity for better health.

Success Stories

- ◆ Since I started with Walk Across Texas, my doctor says my cholesterol is normal and my glycerides have gone down from 638 to 154. *Nueces County.*
- ◆ I have increased my exercise tolerance as well as dropped from an size 18 to a size 14. I look and feel great. I have also gotten my diabetes in more control. It was just a great experience. *Collin County.*

- ◆ After 6 weeks of the program, I lost 8 pounds. I feel lots better, clothes fit better, and blood pressure is lots better. Sleep better and all around feel great. After 8 weeks of the program, I feel 100% better and have lost unwanted pounds. *Cherokee County.*
- ◆ I'm a grandmother in Coleman County, and I have a 2nd grade granddaughter who is slightly overweight and has responded favorably to Walk Across Texas. She has never liked physical activity, and last year she made up all kinds of excuses not to go to P.E. This year the new P.E. teacher started the year with Walk Across Texas and she loves it. She doesn't know it's exercise. She can't wait till the day of the week they walk and she has a much better attitude about P.E. in general. *Coleman County.*
- ◆ As a result of my involvement with walking, my grandson is now more physically active and his Acanthosis Nigricans has diminished as he lost weight. We have a lot of diabetes in our family, so I have been very worried about him as he is just 11 years old. *Nueces County*

Texas Counties Implementing the Walk Across Texas Program in 2006

