Cycling to work cuts cancer and heart disease risk in half

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Using your bike to get to work could cut the risk of developing cancer and heart disease by almost half according to new research. The study by experts from the University of Glasgow found that cycling to work is associated with a 45 per cent lower risk of developing cancer and a 46 per cent lower risk of heart disease, compared to a non-active commute. Overall the study found that commuters who cycled were associated with a 41 per cent lower risk of premature death. Walking to work was associated with 27 per cent lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease and a 36 per cent lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, but not cancer or premature death overall. This study, published in the BMJ today, analysed data from 264,337 participants from UK Biobank who were asked questions about their usual mode of commuting to work and then followed up for five years. The new cases of cancer, heart attacks and deaths in that five-year period were assessed and related to their mode of commuting. The researchers believe their findings suggest that policies designed to make it easier for people to commute by bike may present major opportunities for public health improvement. Dr Jason Gill, from the Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, said: “Cycling all or part of the way to work was associated with substantially lower risk of adverse health outcomes. Those who cycled all of their commute had an over 40 per cent lower risk of heart disease, cancer and overall mortality over the five years of follow-up. If the associations are causal, these findings suggest that policies designed to make it easier for people to commute by bike, such as cycle lanes, city bike hire [and] subsidised cycle purchase schemes, may present major opportunities for public health improvement.” The greater benefits seen with cycling compared with walking may be because cycle commuters covered longer distances than walkers, the intensity of cycling is also higher than walking and cyclists were fitter.  
  
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