**PEDAL POWER**

**Cycling to work almost ‘HALVES the risk’ of developing heart disease and cancer, study claims**

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New study links regular cycling for the commute with reduction in serious health conditions

**CYCLING to work almost halves the risk of developing heart disease and cancer, a study has found.**

Pedal-powered commuters are in less peril as they tend to be fitter.

Walking to work also ­protects the body from the diseases but the benefits are not as great, say scientists.

The experts analysed 264,337 people over five years with an average age of 52 at the outset of the study.

They found cycling to work cuts cancer risk by 45 per cent and cardiovascular disease risk by 46 per cent.

Overall, bike users were 41 per cent less likely to die young than those who drive or rely on public transport.

But biking part of the way before using the train, bus or car also had health benefits, they said.

Walkers were 36 per cent less likely to die from cardiovascular disease if they strolled at least two hours a week at an average 3mph. Their risk of cancer or premature death was no lower.

Researcher Dr Carlos Celis-Morales, of the University of Glasgow, said cycling may be more beneficial because walking commuters averaged six miles a week compared to the pedallers’ 30 miles.

He added: “Walking is generally a lower intensity of exercise than cycling.”

Dr Jason Gill, of the Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, urged the Government to encourage cycle lanes, city bike hire, subsidised cycle purchase schemes and more cycle racks on public transport.

Dr Mike Knapton, of the British Heart Foundation, said it was important to make physical activity easier “to reduce the burden of ill health caused by inactivity”.

He said: “Commuting to work by walking, or better still, cycling, is a great way to get physical activity into your routine.”

Cancer Research UK said: “Anything that gets you a bit hot and out of breath, whether cycling or doing housework, can make a difference.”

The study was ­published in the British Medical Journal.