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**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Health Department encourages students, parents to participate  
in Walk to School Day on Oct. 5**

**Lawrence, Kan.** — The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department encourages students to walk or bike to school Oct. 5 in celebration of International Walk to School Day. Walking and bicycling to school enables children to incorporate the regular physical activity they need each day while also forming healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

The Health Department, in collaboration with the City of Lawrence, Lawrence Public Schools, the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization and LiveWell Lawrence, is working to encourage families to walk or bike as of the part “Be Active Safe Routes,” a community initiative to make it easier for people of all ages, ability, background and socioeconomic status to be more active.

Regular physical activity helps children build strong bones, muscles and joints, and it decreases the risk of chronic conditions like Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. “Physical inactivity is at crisis proportions in America. In the coming decade, preventable chronic health conditions are expected to overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death in Kansas,” said Michael Showalter, Health Promotion Specialist and Safe Routes to School coordinator. “Kids are wired for physical activity, and the research is clear: If we want students to be healthier and perform better in school, we have to give them every opportunity to move.”

Lawrence elementary and middle schools are participating in Walk to School Day by encouraging students, families and staff to walk or bike to school, leading walking school buses or hosting other special events. Lawrence-Douglas County Health Board members, Lawrence school board members, city commissioners and firefighters have been invited to join in the activities throughout Lawrence.

Helmets should be worn at all times when riding a bike. Bicyclists should ride safely by following the rules of the road and obeying traffic laws. Young children should be accompanied by an adult.

**Benefits of walking or biking include:**

- Students who walk or bike to school are healthier.
- Research has shown exercise before school helps children arrive focused and ready to learn.
- Students who walk and bike frequently when they are young are more likely to continue these activities into adulthood.

- When walking or biking, parents and children get an opportunity to bond and appreciate things they don't notice while driving — listening to the sounds of the neighborhood, seeing friends and neighbors and feeling connected with their community.
- Fewer cars on the road means less traffic and congestion and cleaner air.

To learn more, visit [BeActiveSafeRoutes.com](http://BeActiveSafeRoutes.com) or contact Showalter at [mshowalter@ldchealth.org](mailto:mshowalter@ldchealth.org) or 785-856-5340.

### **About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department**

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

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*Together, day by day, building a healthy community*  
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