



## Reducing the stress of commuting to work

Did you know that the average Canadian spends between 26 and 63 minutes per day commuting to and from work?

Researchers have found that the longer your commute, the greater your likelihood of increased health risks. These include factors such as larger waist lines, higher blood pressure and a higher risk of heart disease.

Driving to work can be stressful and not everyone can leave their car at home and still get to work. But whether you drive, walk or take the bus, there are plenty of ways to make the most of your commute.

### If you must drive

Consider a few simple actions you can take to make your commute time a little more enjoyable. These can benefit both your physical and mental wellness.

- Find a travel companion—a commute buddy can help you develop friendships, conserve resources and reduce vehicle-related costs for both of you.
- Stretch before driving—stretching helps to reduce muscle tension in your chest, hips, legs and back.
- Check your posture—sit with your shoulders squared, lift from the crown of your head and keep your spine straight.
- Drink water and eat healthy snacks—water and healthy snacks keep you energized and alert and can help you cope with delays on the road.
- Sing that song—listen to music you find relaxing. You can even sing along if you want to, as singing combats stress hormones.

- Aim to avoid “rush hour”—ask your employer about flex time. Can you schedule your work days so you aren’t always driving when traffic is busiest?
- Other tips—wear or change into comfy shoes and clothes for your commute; breathe easy and try to relax; listen to podcasts, lectures or audio books. For fun, listen to some of your favorite comedy routines.

By using some of these suggestions, you can transform unpleasant driving time into time that is better spent.

### Active transportation: the first steps

If it’s practical—or when you’re able—try active transportation instead of driving. Active transportation includes things like walking or cycling to and from work. It’s a fantastic way to reduce stress and improve your health.

Alternatively, try taking public transportation as well. You can even make public transportation a little more active by walking to and from transit stops or by getting off a few stops ahead of your destination so you can add a walk to your commute.

### Learn more

[Active Transportation - You and Your Community](#)

A WellSpring article on active transportation from the Alberta Centre for Active Living.

[Commuter Challenge](#)

Information on an active transportation challenge held each June in cities across Canada. (The Commuter Challenge is hosted nationally by the Sustainable Alberta Association.)

Content provided courtesy of Alberta Health’s Healthy U initiative.



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