



Towragi resident and health and lifestyle coach Marion Maclean walks for 70 minutes each day and loves it. Picture: ADAM MACLEAN

Time to walk the walk

Ditch the car for the National Walk to Work Day on October 2. But, writes KATELIN MCINERNEY, don't stop there - make it a lifelong habit.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) is so alarmed at the state of the nation's health, that it has issued a doctor's prescription to all Australians to take a 30-minute walk every day, beginning on Walk to Work Day on Friday, October 2.

Now in its 7th year, National Walk to Work Day is an annual event that encourages Australians to walk part or all of the way to work, for better health and cleaner air.

AMA federal vice president Dr Steve Hambleton said all Australians needed to take this script very seriously.

"It is just as important as a script for heart medication, anti-depressants, diabetic medication or anti-cancer medication," he said.

"If you follow the walking script as prescribed and take it with a healthy diet, it will reduce the risk that your doctor will have reason to write you these other scripts later in life."

According to the federal health department, 72 per cent of Australians are not exercising anywhere near the recommended daily 30 minutes, and 61.3 per cent of Australian adults are classified as overweight or obese.

Towragi resident and health

and lifestyle coach Marion Maclean was keen to see Illawarra residents take the good doctor's advice and hit the pavement on October 2.

"Walk to Work Day is a wonderful way to kickstart a healthy habit in all of us," she said.

"If you live more than one or two kilometres away from your work, then use public transport and get off a stop early or park the car a few blocks away and walk.

"Walking is great for the cardiovascular system and it gets the blood pumping around the body and as your fitness gradually improves, you will find, whether it is writing letters or shovelling coal, your day will be easier if you are fit."

Maclean runs a lifestyle and fitness website, You are what you Eat (youarewhatyoueat.com.au), and spent 25 years in the fitness industry. Over that time, she has never lost her passion for walking.

"I walk for 70 minutes every day and I love it," she said.

"I am very passionate about getting people off pills, potions and anything gimmicky, because the key to a healthy, sustainable lifestyle is not quick shakes or boot camps, it has to be sustainable and that is why walking is so great.

"When was the last time you watched a sunrise or sunset, or took the chance to listen to nature or a good friend? Do it as early as possible because that intake of oxygen gets you thinking with more clarity, it is easier to make excuses at the end of the day.

"I get a million and one excuses from people, but just getting to bed half an hour earlier means you can get up half an hour earlier and start off with 20 minutes - 10 minutes out and 10 minutes back.

"There are no expensive joining fees, just pull on a comfortable pair of shoes and get both feet out the front door."

Maclean said Walk to Work Day was a chance for people to put their health before other priorities and see how easy it was to incorporate regular moderate exercise into their daily routine - even with kids, pets, family, jobs,

bills and work to juggle.

"You need to be a little bit selfish when it comes to your health," she said.

"When I ask people what their number one priority is and they reply their kids, their family, work, their husband, that is all very noble, but you can't be the best mother, wife, worker or community member if you are ill and unfit.

"Exercise, like walking, is a great stress buster, it elevates your mood while your body burns calories and by toning those muscles, your circulation improves, you feel healthy and more energetic, it boosts your immune system and releases endorphins, which is why when you hit the shower afterwards, you feel a million dollars.

"And it is a magnificent way to spend quality time with your partner or good friend."

How to participate

It is easy - strap on your walking shoes and head off to work. Alternatively, use public transport and get off the bus or train a few stops earlier and walk the rest of the way. Take a half-hour walk at lunch-time or walk up stairs.

Leave the car at home or park your vehicle a kilometre or

two from your destination and walk the remaining distance.

Employers and managers can become Corporate Ambassadors. Sign up online and encourage everyone to walk to work.

For more information and tips log on to www.walk.com.au