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**US Surgeon General Launches Campaign with National Call to Action on Walking**

*Effort highlights health benefits of walking while addressing barriers to access*

Today, the United States Surgeon General issued a call to action to address major public health challenges such as heart disease and diabetes. *Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities* articulates the health benefits of walking while addressing the fact that many communities unacceptably lack safe and convenient places for individuals to walk or wheelchair roll.

“Everyone deserves to have a safe place to walk or wheelchair roll. But in too many of our communities, that is not the reality,” said Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the 19th U.S. Surgeon General. “We know that an active lifestyle is critical to achieving good overall health. And walking is a simple, effective and affordable way to build physical activity into our lives. That is why we need to step it up as a country ensuring that everyone can choose to walk in their own communities.”

Data consistently show there are safety and accessibility issues that make communities less walkable. A 2013 study by the U.S. Department of Transportation, for example, found that three out of every 10 Americans reported that no sidewalks existed along any streets in their neighborhood. Low-income communities are particularly disadvantaged because violence – and the perception of violence – may prove a barrier to walking.

The Surgeon General calls on community planners and local leaders to create more areas for walking and wheelchair rolling and to prioritize the development of safe routes for children to get to and from schools. The call to action suggests that these designs should include sidewalks, curb cuts, crosswalks, safe crossings for the visually impaired and more green spaces. The Surgeon General further calls on city managers, law enforcement and community and public health leaders to address safety concerns by better maintaining public spaces, working with residents to promote a shared sense of community ownership, ensuring proper street lighting and fostering neighborhood watch programs.

The Surgeon General’s report discusses the health benefits of walking and calls on individuals to make walking a priority in their lives. Fewer than half of all U.S. adults get enough physical activity to reduce their risk of chronic disease, and only a quarter of high school students get the recommended amount. Physical inactivity contributes to heart and lung disease, diabetes and cancer, which account for 86% of our nation’s health care costs. Building walking into daily life can reduce disease and save money.

“We know that an average of 22 minutes a day of physical activity -- such as brisk walking – can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes,” added Dr. Murthy. “The key is to get started because even a small first effort can make a big difference in improving the personal health of an individual and the public health of the nation.”

To read the Surgeon General’s Call to Action and learn how to promote walking and walkable communities, please visit [www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov). And, if you’d like to add a little music to your walks, be sure to check out the Surgeon General’s walking playlist on [Pandora.com](file:///C:\Users\kate.migliaccio\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\JW9AGSXM\pandora.com)/SGStepItUp (dropping on 9/9).

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