

Walk Across Texas!

<http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/>

Walk Across Texas! is an eight week program to help people of all ages support one another to establish the habit of regular physical activity. Walk Across Texas! is recognized as a Best Practice Physical Activity Program by the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Relevance

- 27 percent of Texans are obese.
- 29 percent of American adults are not physically active at all.
- Only 25 percent of adults and 27 percent of high school students get regular, moderate exercise.
- Texas ranks 8th in the nation as the most physically inactive state.
- Texas ranks 15th as the state with the highest adult obesity rates.
- Texas ranks 6th as the state with the highest childhood overweight rates.
- Regular physical activity and controlling weight can significantly reduce the incidence and impact of chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, and depression.
- Regular physical activity is also associated with fewer physician visits, hospitalizations, and medications.
- Chronic diseases account for 70 percent of deaths and 75 percent of U.S. health-care costs each year.
- With regular physical activity, 58 percent



of people with pre-diabetes were able to temporarily or permanently delay the onset of type 2 diabetes.

- Community-wide programs like Walk Across Texas! have been strongly associated with significant increases in physical activity.

Response

The Walk Across Texas! program was designed to help establish the habit of regular physical activity. For eight weeks, teams of eight people, school classes, or individuals walk 830 miles across a map of Texas.

- Visit <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu>.
- The program begins with an Extension agent forming a community task force with members from targeted groups such as schools, worksites, churches, etc.
- Plan Kick-Off, Half-Way, and Recognition activities.
- Train site managers, captains, teachers, and other volunteer helpers.
- Register participants online.
- Walk for eight weeks.
- Enter mileage online.
- Provide recognition for the team walking the most miles and the team reaching the "destination" (830 miles) first.

Results

Walk Across Texas! significantly increases participants' physical activity.

- 100 Texas counties participated in 2008.
- 25,689 total (adults and youth) registered statewide.

- 17,744 adults registered statewide.
- 12,299 adults finished the program.
- 7,945 youth participated in school teams.
- At least 10 other state Extensions have adapted this program for their residents.
- 50 percent of participants report feeling decreased stress after participating.

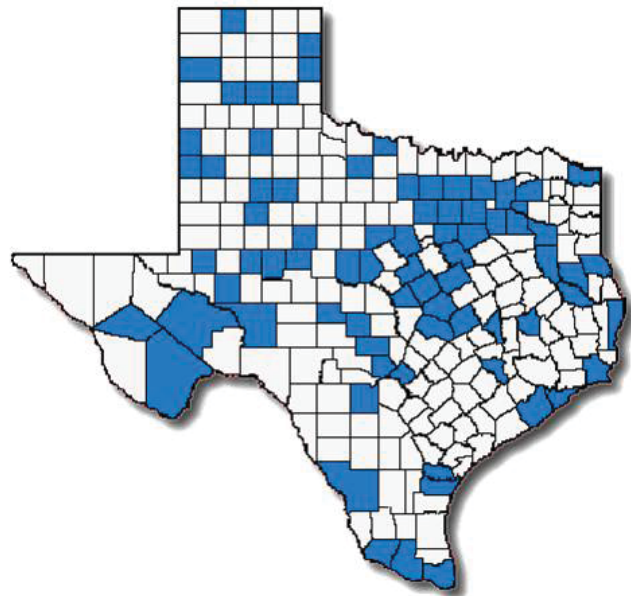
Comparison Week 1 to Week 8 Individual Mileage			
Year	Week 1	Week 8	Mean Difference
1999	10.7 mi	12.1 mi	1.4 mi
2000	10.7 mi	12.7 mi	2.0 mi
2001	10.1 mi	11.4 mi	1.3 mi
2003	13.2 mi	14.9 mi	1.8 mi
2004	15.7 mi	17.5 mi	1.8 mi
2005	16.9 mi	19.3 mi	2.3 mi
2006	19.5 mi	23.3 mi	3.8 mi
2007	21.4 mi	25.3 mi	4.1 mi
2008	21.5 mi	26.0 mi	4.47 mi

Economic Impact

- Medical research shows that exercise and weight loss can permanently or temporarily delay the onset of type 2 diabetes in 58 percent of people.
- Over the lifetimes of the 12,299 team participants in 2008, it is estimated that 2,610 could prevent the onset of diabetes through increased physical activity.
- Annual health care costs for people without diabetes are estimated between \$2,560 and \$5,642, and at \$13,243 for people with diabetes.
- Including the cost of lost wages, the total potential economic impact for the 2008 team participants is approximately \$121 million.

Walk Across Texas! program participants commented:

- My family has really enjoyed this program. My blood glucose stayed in range, and my sleep pattern was better. I also had more energy, which allowed me and my family to spend more time walking together and less time watching TV.
- The greatest thing that I gained from Walk Across Texas this year was my husband starting the exercise program. When he first started walking, he could hardly walk a mile without his leg going numb or having a pain somewhere. He now walks three miles 4-5 days a week.
- After 8 weeks of the program, I lost 18 pounds and dropped 4 sizes. I feel lots better, clothes fit better, and blood pressure is lots better – all around I feel great.
- WAT really gave me the jump start and the motivation to exercise. I feel so much better. At my last doctor visit, my blood pressure was 120/80. That's down from 138/90.



Texas Counties Participating in Walk Across Texas! in 2008.

Leadership provided by Dr. Carol Rice, Extension Health Specialist, and Ms. Alice Kirk, Child Health Specialist—Family Development and Resource Management (2009). For more information: crice@ag.tamu.edu or 979.845.3877; akirk@ag.tamu.edu or 979.458.2098.