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Walk to store keeps weight down: study

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VICTORIA -- Want to lose weight? Try moving closer to a grocery store.

A new study from the University of B.C. shows people who live within a kilometre of a grocery store are half as likely to be overweight, compared to those living in neighbourhoods without grocery stores.

The study shows that old-style urban planning that mixes retail with residential zones gets people out of their cars, onto the sidewalks, and helps them keep their weight down.

And if one grocery store is good, two or more is even better, the report released Monday showed.

Researchers found that every additional store within a kilometre translated into an 11 per cent reduction in the likelihood of being overweight.

"People have to access food," said study author Lawrence Frank. "It's a marker for other commercial uses, as well, so it's not just grocery stores that matter."


The research found that people walked more often when they lived in neighbourhoods with good street lighting, continuous sidewalks and a variety of shops, services, schools, parks and workplaces within walking distance.

The study also linked body mass to urban design, showing that people who live in suburb-style neighbourhoods that force them to drive to the store makes them more likely to be overweight.

-- Canwest News Service

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