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Compact cities can enhance mobility and improve health

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Picture:



Country:

Europe-wide

Topic:

Policy and research

Body:

A new study suggests that compact cities that focus on cycling and walking could boost the health of citizens.

'Land use, transport, and population health: estimating the health benefits of compact cities', a paper by an international team of researchers, was published last week in UK medical journal *The Lancet*.

The team used characteristics from six cities – Boston, Copenhagen, Delhi, London, Melbourne and São Paulo - to model the city-specific effect of land use and urban design interventions on the choices of transport and population health.

The authors argue that considerable health gains are observed by city planning that encourages a compact city—namely, a city of short distances that promotes increased residential density, mixed land use, proximate and enhanced public transport, and an urban form that encourages cycling and walking.

The paper says that a 'compact-city approach' reduces pollution from motor vehicles, and that policies that incentivise walking, cycling, and public transport while reducing subsidies for private motor vehicle use will influence the health and sustainability of growing cities.

'City planners and policy makers—who have the power to influence the health of rapidly expanding cities and increasingly motorised populations—need to prioritise the minimisation of health risk exposures while maintaining or enhancing the mobility of city residents,' the authors write.

To download the paper, visit thelancet.com (opens pdf, 6.3MB).

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