

# 8KM HEALTH WALK PROGRAM IN THE DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU: AN OVERVIEW OF THE WALKERS NCD

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## Abstract

**ABSTRACT:** The Government of Tamil Nadu is proactively addressing the rise of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) by introducing measures such as establishing "health walk pathways" across the state. Physical activity is recognized as a significant risk factor for NCDs, and the World Health Organization recommends individuals aged 18 years and above engage in 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week. This secondary data analysis aims to profile the NCD status of participants in health walks. Among the 19,910 individuals screened for Hypertension and Diabetes, 66% were found to be normal, while 26% were known to have either Hypertension or Diabetes. Moreover, 8% of participants were newly diagnosed with either Hypertension, Diabetes, or both. These findings underscore the importance of proactive measures in NCD prevention and highlight the potential role of novel community-based initiatives that help in modifying the risk factors of non-communicable diseases

**KEYWORDS:** Non-communicable diseases, health walk, risk factor modification

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of Tamil Nadu is taking proactive measures to combat the growing instances of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). As part of this initiative, the state has introduced a home-based drug delivery component called the 'Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam' scheme. This program is designed to enhance the detection, treatment, and follow-up of NCDs to achieve better compliance and control rates across the whole state.

Physical inactivity constitutes a pivotal risk factor for non-communicable diseases and ranks fourth among the leading contributors to premature mortality worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that individuals aged 18 years and above engage in a minimum of 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, such as brisk walking, or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, such as running, every week, as a means of promoting healthy living. Physical activity contributes to a 27% reduction in complications associated with hypertension and diabetes and a 30% reduction in complications associated with heart disease. Regular physical activity, such as brisk walking, confer benefits such as the maintenance of optimal body weight, the management of chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes, and the attenuation of mental stress.<sup>1</sup>

Considering the above facts, the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Tamil Nadu has made an announcement in the Assembly 2023-24, to bring in the habit of regular walking named "Health Walking (Nadappom Nalam Peruvom)" focussing on motivation

and encouragement of the public to have a physically active lifestyle to avoid and manage chronic non-communicable diseases. The initiative was launched in a bid to promote a healthy lifestyle among people, and thus named 'Nadappom Nalam Peruvom (Health Walk)'

The Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, in collaboration with local bodies and municipal administration, has identified one walkway in each of the 38 revenue districts. The identified walkway should be an 8 km stretch walkway, either circular or linear, with the same start and end points. This walkway should already be established and in use by the general public and should have all necessary amenities such as resting areas, green shades, directional signs, milestone markings, drinking water and toilet facilities. Additionally, there will be various IEC boards to raise awareness about the importance of health walks and non-communicable diseases. The guidelines and checklist for the selection of the health walk area and the conduct of the health walk program are framed and communicated for uniform implementation across the State. The Government has sanctioned Rs.57 lakhs as per the proposal submitted by the Tamil Nadu Health Systems Reform Program (TNHSRP) for establishing and maintenance of the health walk pathway. The program was launched on November 4, 2023, in all districts. According



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to the program guidelines, all Deputy Directors of Health Services are required to conduct a Health Walk campaign and medical camp on the first Sunday of every month. The report on these activities should be maintained in registers in the prescribed format and monitored by the state. This study aims to analyse the health walkers' profile and their status of non-communicable diseases based on State data collected in the last three months since the program's launch.

## METHODOLOGY

**STUDY DESIGN :** Secondary data analysis of the State Data on Health Walk Program

**STUDY DESIGN :** December 2023 to March 2024

**STUDY AREA :** All Districts of Tamil Nadu

**STUDY PARTICIPANTS :** Health walkers who used the 8 km Health walk pathway on the 1st Sunday of every month.

**STATISTICAL ANALYSIS :** Microsoft Excel

## FINDINGS

The secondary data analysis of the four months (Dec 23 to Mar 24) State report shows an average of 6000 participants per month in the '8 km Health Walk Program'. Out of the total walkers, 19910 who reported voluntarily to the medical camp organized on the 1st Sunday were screened for Hypertension and Diabetes of which 13063 (66%) are found to be normal and 5289 (26%) are known to have Hypertension and/or Diabetes. Among the screened, 1558 (8%) are newly diagnosed to have either Hypertension, Diabetes or both Hypertension and Diabetes. The findings are shown in table 1 and figure 1.

Table 1: Walkers Health Profile in 8km Health Walk Program

Month	No. of Participants in Health Walk on 1st Sunday	No. Screened for HT and DM	No. Normal out of Screened	Newly Diagnosed among Screened	Known among the Screened
Dec-23	6522	5221	3476	478	1267
Jan-24	6648	5578	3723	348	1507
Feb-24	6296	5187	3215	459	1513
Mar-24	4844	3924	2649	273	1002
<b>Total</b>	<b>24310</b>	<b>19910</b>	<b>13063</b>	<b>1558</b>	<b>5289</b>

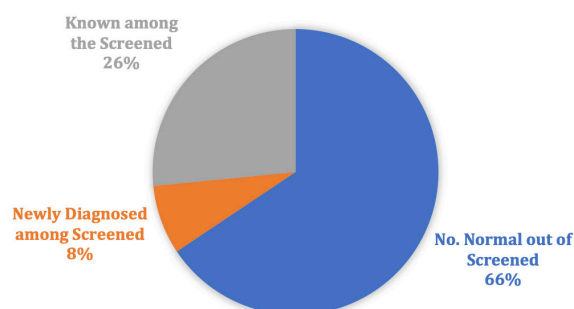


Figure 1: Walkers Health Profile in 8km Health Walk Programme

## DISCUSSION

This analysis shows the Walkers NCD profile under the 8 km health walk program launched by the Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu through the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine in coordination with the local bodies and municipal administration.

According to the secondary data analysis, 66% of the walkers were found to be normal after being screened for hypertension and diabetes. Another 26% of them were already known to have either hypertension, diabetes, or both. The remaining 8% were newly diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes or both and were put on treatment.

It is worth noting that the majority of the walkers consisted of normal people, which could be attributed to the general public's awareness of health walks and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Although these program reports are from the early months, the trend is quite promising.

The NCD screening details of the walkers on 1st Sunday of every month are recorded in the prescribed format issued by the State NCD section of the Directorate of Public Health and Preventive Medicine.

## CONCLUSION

The 8km health walk program is a recently launched initiative that encourages people to walk for better health. After just four months, a secondary data analysis was conducted to study the NCD (non-communicable diseases) health profile of the walkers. However, to fully understand the impact of the program and how walkers perceive it, further research is necessary. This additional research can play a vital role in informing policymakers, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders involved in designing and implementing health programs. Moreover, the study's results can also contribute to developing evidence-based health interventions that promote healthy lifestyles and prevent NCDs.

## REFERENCE

1. WHO guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour: at a glance 2020