Cycling is a fun, simple and effective form of exercise that allows you to throw away that gym membership forever! There are multiple health benefits that can be achieved from even just a few minutes a day.

**Weight loss**
- A 30 minute bike ride at moderate intensity burns approximately 300 calories (Bicycling.com) - that’s the equivalent of a regular sized chocolate bar! Do that daily and you will meet the average adult’s recommended daily exercise requirement.
- According to the World Health Organisation, just 30 minutes of cycling each day can be all the exercise you need to halve your chances of becoming obese or diabetic. And you don’t have to do it all at once – bike for 15 minutes to work in the morning and 15 minutes home in the evening.
- Incorporate fast intervals into your ride and you can burn three and a half times more body fat than you would cycling for longer at a slower pace. The body’s metabolic rate – the efficiency at which it burns calories and fat – is not only raised during a bike ride, but for several hours afterwards (BikeRadar.com, 2012). As you get fitter, the benefits increase!

**Healthy cycle snacks**
- There’s no need to buy those expensive high-tech energy bars and gels when the humble banana is probably the best cycling snack of all.
- This ‘magic fruit’ is packed with carbohydrates, protein and potassium (an important electrolyte). Bananas also give you 17% of your daily requirement of vitamin C, an antioxidant that neutralizes free radicals (harmful waste products) in your body and helps produce collagen, the building block of the connective tissues, such as tendons and cartilage that keep your knees strong.
- The magnesium in bananas helps keep your body moving while the protein helps with muscle recovery.

**Exercise your lungs and your legs**
- Because your lungs work harder when you’re cycling, regular cycling will help strengthen your cardiovascular system over time, enabling your heart and lungs to work more efficiently and get more oxygen when it’s needed. This means that when you exercise regularly, it gets easier.

**Well-being and productivity**
- Get on your bike and your boss will love you. A study carried out by the University of Bristol found that employees who exercised before work or at lunchtime improved their time and workload management, and it boosted their motivation and ability to deal with stress.

**Better brain power**
- Cycling is good for your brain as well as your body. Research shows that aerobic activity, such as cycling, grows new brain cells (neurons) in the hippocampus – the part of the brain responsible for memory (University of California, 2001).
- Water – don’t be seduced by the marketing around flash sports drinks. They are expensive and packed with kilojoules and chemicals and for most rides, especially those less than an hour, you only need water.
- Trail mix is great for the more intensive and longer rides.
- Apples and pears.
- Bagels with sticky fillings, such as peanut butter and low-fat cheese.
- Sandwiches – cold toasted sandwiches sound gross, but they are awesome as the filling is welded in and doesn’t flop out when you are biking along.
- Hard-boiled eggs – peeled of course!
Brighten your mood
• Cranking through the kilometres will lift your spirits! Mild to moderate exercise releases natural, 'feel-good' endorphins, which help counter stress and make you feel happy. Those who exercise regularly are more likely to be happier and satisfied with their life than those who don’t exercise, according to a study undertaken at Vrije University in Amsterdam (Preventive Medicine, 2007).

Wake up!
• It sounds counter-intuitive, but if you’re feeling tired, go for a ride. Physical activity for even a few minutes is a surprisingly effective wake-up call.

Youth
• Now is a great time to get kids into fun, healthy habits that could last a lifetime. A 2007 survey by the University of Auckland showed that one third of secondary school students are overweight or obese and only 11% of students meet the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity daily (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008).

Improve performance at work and school
• By commuting to work or school by bike, you’ll not only arrive feeling relaxed after avoiding heavy traffic, you will also arrive feeling awake and alert having stimulated your blood flow.

Women’s health
• Cycling is a great way to burn calories and look great. You will tone your leg and butt muscles while also calling on the muscles in your back, arms and neck. It also works the postural muscles in the lower and mid abdomen.
• Cycling can be a great social sport too. Grab a couple of friends and head to a biking trail near you – there are plenty of great rides throughout New Zealand.
• Women have a higher prevalence of arthritis and osteoporosis than men (Statistics New Zealand, 2005), so cycling is an ideal form of low-impact exercise that keeps bones healthy while being easy on the joints.

Men’s health
• Cycling is a great way to participate in group activity while increasing your health and fitness. There are a number of statistics that link improvements in men’s health to support networks, both in health or otherwise.
• Research also emphasises the importance of dads being good role models – this is an obvious reason to stay active and ride with your kids.