

Walking as Exercise



Take a Walk!

Go ahead....your body was meant to be on the move!

You probably don't think of walking as exercise, but can be depending on how fast and how long you walk.

If you walk briskly on a regular schedule, you can get the same benefits (and even more) as other more active forms of exercise.

Don't think of walking as too easy to do you any good!

Walking can help you look and feel good



Walking can relax you, ease minor aches and pains, and help you maintain or lose weight. You'll wake up easier, have more energy, and work better throughout the day.

Walking can help you achieve a number of important health benefits, such as reducing your risk for a heart attack or developing type 2 diabetes, managing your blood pressure, and reducing the feelings of anxiety or depression.

Steps to Walking

Here are a few more reasons why you should take a walk:

- You can do it anywhere.
- You can do it anytime.
- It's free. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes.
- You know how to walk already. No training is needed.
- Almost everyone can do it. Whether you're 5 or 82, you can walk!
- Talk to your doctor before you start any exercise program.



Make it Work for You

For walking to be a workout, move at a steady pace that's fast enough to make your heart beat faster and cause you to breathe more deeply. When you walk at a fast pace, you strengthen your heart. It becomes more efficient as it pumps blood and oxygen throughout your body.

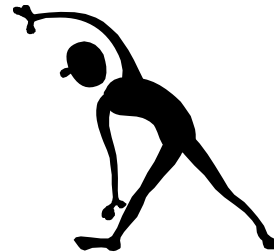
To get the best results, walk at least three times a week for at least twenty minutes each time. The more you walk, the better you feel. Put your foot forward and take a walk today.

If you haven't been active, start slow and increase your pace gradually!

1. Be in the Know

Do you know how you carry your body? Body posture makes a big difference. Keep these tips in mind:

- Hold your head and back straight
- Point toes straight ahead
- Keep your stomach flat
- Swing arms loosely at your sides
- Land on your heel and roll forward off the ball of your foot



2. Warm up

It's important to take a few minutes to bend and stretch your muscles before you go walking. It will decrease your chances for muscle strain and injury. Warming up increases blood flow to the parts of your body that will be active. Try these exercises:

- **Wall Stretcher** – Stand three feet away from the wall, legs apart. Put your hand on the wall and lean forward, bending your arms but keeping your back straight.
- **Knee Pull** – Lie flat on your back with legs out straight and arms at your sides. Hug arms around legs just below the knees, and gently pull legs to chest, raising buttocks slightly off the floor.
- **Reach for the Sky** – Stand tall, feet shoulder-width apart and raise arms over head. Lengthen arms as high as possible. Keep heels on the floor and hold for 10 seconds. Bend knees slightly and bend down slowly from the waist until your arms touch the floor. If you can't stretch down this far, just reach as far as you can.

Hold each position for about 10 seconds and repeat each position 3 to 5 times. Your body should be warm all over now!

3. Treat Your Feet

Take care of your feet when you walk. Wear cushioned shoes that provide support. Buy shoes with thick soles, arch support, and uppers made of material that let your feet breathe. Pick sneakers made for walking.

4. Walking Out the Door

If you haven't exercised in a while, try walking at different speeds and distances. See what works best for you. Start at a slow and comfortable pace. Then slowly increase the speed and distance over time.

5. Feel Alive

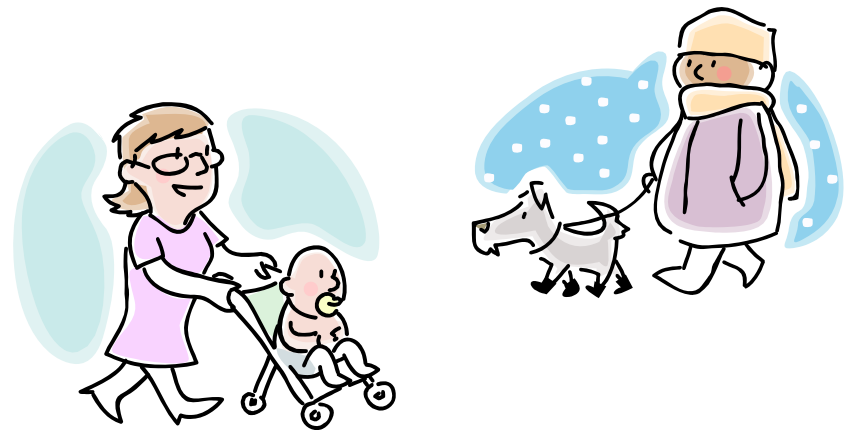
Don't push yourself. Slow down or stop if you get dizzy, or have pain or feel sick to your stomach. You should be able to carry a conversation while walking. If you become short of breath, you're going too fast. Don't compete with others. You're not in a race!



Here are some additional tips :

- Carry water with you to drink if you plan to walk ten minutes or longer.
- Put on a hat or wear sunblock on sunny days
- Wear light colored clothing if you are walking at night
- Take a cell phone with you in case of emergencies
- Do not carry weights as you walk. This can throw you off balance.
- Find ways to include walking in your everyday routine. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever you can. Walk to stores if they are nearby. Get off one stop earlier on the subway or the bus and walk the rest of the way to reach your destination.
- Make it fun. Invite spouse, children or friends to join you. Plan different routes to keep yourself motivated.
- Set performance goals. If you have not been active, it generally takes about six months for new behaviors to become a habit.

**Make your walk a fun experience.
Make walking work for you!**



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