

GET STARTED

Walking is one of the easiest and safest ways to get more exercise everyday. Chances are, since you've been walking most of your life, you're likely an expert at it already!

You won't need any special equipment or lesson- just a good pair of walking shoes- and walking is a natural movement that's virtually free.

Best of all, it's an activity you can enjoy by yourself or with friends and family. You can even join a walking group and start making new friends while you get fit!

As long as you have the desire



Health Benefits of Walking:

- Revitalizes the mind, reduces fatigue, increases energy and bone density
- Relieves stress and tension
- Reduces risk of heart disease, depression, hypertension, stroke & diabetes
- Helps boost self image
- Assists with weight loss or maintenance.

To be more active, the rest can be easy! Here's a checklist of what you'll need to get your walking program off on the right foot:

- ◇ A good pair of shoes
- ◇ Comfortable, loose-fitting clothing
- ◇ A safe place to walk
- ◇ A pedometer to count your steps

Proper Walking Technique

Even though most of us have been walking since we were about a year old, we don't always walk in a way that promotes optimum fitness and minimizes risk of injury. When walking for fitness, these factors become very important. With each step keep these in mind:

- * Walk with good posture: Chin up and shoulders slightly back
- * Your heel should touch the ground first
- * Roll over the ball of your foot onto your toes
- * One foot should bear all your weight until your other heel strikes the ground
- * Swing your arms naturally
- * Breathe normally (in 1-2 out 1-2)

Designing a Plan for You

Starting an exercise program means making some adjustments to your lifestyle, but the results are well worth the effort. To make things easier try to schedule your walks into your day and do what you can around your daily commitments. Start small and be patient - it takes time to build new habits.

Start by making a commitment to walk three times per week. Once you have successfully reached this goal, set a new goal to gradually make walking part of your everyday routine. Remember:

- It's ok to take a break or rest while walking
- It takes time for your body to adjust to a new exercise routine - stiffness in the first couple of days is common.



Proper Stretching Technique

Stretching helps to improve your flexibility and muscle tone. It can also help to prevent injuries and post-exercise stiffness. When stretching remember:

- Stretches should feel comfortable, not painful
- Do not bounce into the stretch
- Maintain good posture
- Breathe normally, don't hold breath
- Hold stretches for 15-30 seconds



Using a Pedometer

A pedometer works based on the up and down movement of the hip as you walk. The pedometer must be upright to work properly and it should be clipped at the waistline above the center of your thigh or knee. You can check the accuracy of the position by walking 20 steps and reposition the pedometer as necessary.



Counting the Steps

On average, most people take about 5,000 steps a day. In order to achieve health benefits, your goal is to take 10,000 steps on most days of the week.

Don't worry about reaching this goal right away. Instead, figure out how many daily steps you're currently taking and work to increase this by 20% until you reach 10,000.