

WALKING FOR EXERCISE & FITNESS



BASIC INFORMATION

ADVANTAGES OF WALKING

- Almost everyone can do it.
- You can do it almost anywhere.
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- It doesn't cost anything.
- Walking is the most popular form of exercise. When done briskly on a regular schedule, it can improve the body's ability to consume oxygen during exertion, lower the resting heart rate, reduce blood pressure, and increase the efficiency of the heart and lungs. It also helps burn excess calories. Walking burns about the same amount of calories per mile as does running.
- Since obesity and high blood pressure are among the leading risk factors for heart attack and stroke, walking offers some protection against two of our major killers.
- Walkers feel better and sleep better, and their mental outlook improves.
- Walking can exert a favorable influence on personal habits. For example, smokers who begin walking often cut down or quit. There are two reasons for this. One, it is difficult to exercise vigorously if you smoke, and two, better physical condition encourages a desire to improve other aspects of one's life.
- What makes a walk a workout? It's largely a matter of pace and distance. When you're walking for exercise, you don't saunter, stroll, or shuffle. Instead, you move out at a steady clip that is brisk enough to make your heart beat faster and cause you to breathe more deeply.

WHAT SHOES TO WEAR

- A good pair of shoes is the only "special equipment" required by the walker. Any shoes that are comfortable, provide good support, and don't cause blisters or calluses will do. Here are some suggestions:
 - Good running shoes (the training models with heavy soles) are good walking shoes, as are some of the lighter trail and hiking boots, and casual shoes with heavy rubber or crepe rubber soles.
 - Whatever kind of shoe you select, it should have arch supports and should elevate the heel one-half to three-quarters of an inch above the sole of the foot.
 - Choose a shoe with uppers made of materials that "breathe," such as leather or nylon mesh.

WALKING STYLE

- Hold the head erect and keep the back straight and the abdomen flat. Toes should point straight ahead and arms should swing loosely at sides.
- Land on the heel of the foot and roll forward to drive off the ball of the foot. Walking on the ball of the foot, or in a flat-footed style, may cause fatigue and soreness.
- Take long, easy strides, but don't strain for distance. When walking up or down hills, or at a very rapid pace,

lean forward slightly.

- Breathe deeply (with mouth open, if that is more comfortable).

STARTING YOUR WALKING PROGRAM

- No one can tell you exactly how far or how fast to walk at the start, but you can determine the proper pace and distance by experimenting. Begin by walking for 20 minutes at least four or five times a week at a pace that feels comfortable to you. If that proves to be too tiring, or too easy, reduce or lengthen your time.
- Some people begin by walking for one or two minutes, resting a minute, and repeating this cycle until they begin to be fatigued. Where you have to start isn't important; it's where you're going that counts.
- Gradually increase your time and pace. After you have been walking for 20 minutes several days a week for one month, start walking 30 minutes per outing. Eventually, your goal should be to get to the place where you can comfortably walk three miles in 45 minutes, but there is no hurry about getting there.
- The speed at which you walk is less important than the time you devote to it, but try to walk as briskly as your condition permits. It takes about 20 minutes for your body to begin realizing the "training effects" of sustained exercise.
- A "talk test" helps you find the right pace. You should be able to carry on a conversation while walking. If you're too breathless to talk, you're going too fast.
- The more often you walk, the faster you will improve. Three workouts a week are a "maintenance level" of exercise. More frequent workouts are required for swift improvement.

CAUTION

If you develop dizziness, pain, nausea, or other unusual symptoms, slow down or stop. If the problem persists, see your health care provider before walking again.

MAKING IT WORK FOR YOU

The most important thing is simply to set aside part of each day and walk. No matter what your age or condition, it can make you healthier and happier.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has questions about walking for exercise and fitness.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page