

One Step at a Time

Starting a walking or other cardiorespiratory program will benefit you in many ways:

- Conditions your heart, lungs and vascular systems.
- Lowers your blood pressure and resting pulse.
- Raises your level of HDL cholesterol — the good kind of cholesterol.
- Lowers your risk for cardiovascular diseases such as heart attack, stroke, and atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).
- Increases your stamina.
- Helps you lose excess body fat.
- Tones your major muscles.
- Improves your sense of well-being.
- Improves your sleep.
- Boosts your energy level.

Live longer, look better and feel great — sounds great, doesn't it?

Getting Started

Walking is an ideal activity for almost any fitness level, at just about any weight. You can walk just about anywhere, anytime with minimal equipment.

Shoes: Wear comfortable shoes with flexible thick soles designed for walking.

Clothing: Wear comfortable cotton clothing in layers. Don't be too concerned with how you look — the goal is to feel good.

Sun Protection: Don't forget to wear a hat, sunscreen and sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection during the peak hours of the day, even during the winter.

Location: Choose a safe location with even surfaces. Try your neighborhood, parks, malls, high school track, hiking trails, or a treadmill at home or at the gym.

Safety: Walk in the daytime or in well-lit areas. Stay aware of your surroundings. Wear reflective clothing or shoes at night. Let others know your route and expected time of return and take a mobile phone

with you, if possible. Carry pepper spray or a whistle in case you are in danger. Walking with a partner provides additional security.

Partners: Choose one or more partners to add safety, accountability and fun. Pets, children on bikes or in strollers make good partners too.

Proper Walking Technique: Walk with your head and chin up, your shoulders held slightly back and your stomach pulled in. Touch your heel to the ground first then roll your weight forward with your toes pointing straight ahead. Swing your arms as you walk, either down at your side or with your elbows flexed to 90 degrees with your fist swinging up to the level of your breastbone.

Get FITT

Walking is a fun and very effective way to get fit. By adjusting the frequency (how often), intensity (how much effort you use), time (how long you walk) and type (alternating walking with other cardiorespiratory activities like hiking, swimming, dancing or bike riding), you can create a program that's just right for you.



Frequency: Set a goal to walk "most days of the week" and at the beginning of the week, schedule your walks and write them down on your calendar. If you have to cancel, reschedule just as you would any other important appointment.

Most people find it easier to be consistent when they exercise first thing in the morning, before other distractions get in the way. Of course, the bonus is increased energy and less stress throughout the rest of the day. You can also break your walk into several shorter sessions if you're too busy or not used to exercising; you'll still get the benefits.



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Intensity: Your fitness level will determine how fast you walk. Your goal is to use enough effort to challenge your body so it will become more fit. You can increase the intensity of your walk by going faster, moving your arms, pushing a stroller, walking uphill or using one of the fitness programs on your treadmill. Each activity session should be composed of four parts:

Warm Up: Walk slowly for five minutes and allow your muscles to warm up by increasing your circulation.

Brisk Walk: Gradually increase your speed as you begin to feel more energetic. You should be able to carry on a conversation, but if you can sing go a little faster. As you become more fit, adjust the intensity and time by adding a few extra minutes to your walk and walk a little faster to challenge yourself.

Cool down: Walk slowly for 5 minutes to allow your muscles to cool down and your circulation to return to normal.

Stretching: Stretching after your warm up and again at the end of your walk will help prevent injuries.

Time: This sample schedule is one way to build your cardiorespiratory fitness. If you haven't been exercising regularly, start at the top and gradually work your way up to 20 to 60 minutes a day. If you are already exercising, simply choose the starting point that matches your current fitness level and go from there.

Sample Walking Schedule

WEEK	WARM-UP	BRISK WALK	COOL DOWN	TOTAL TIME	STRETCHING
1	5 min	5 min	5 min	15 min	After walk
2	5 min	7 min	5 min	17 min	After walk
3	5 min	10 min	5 min	20 min	After walk
4	5 min	12 min	5 min	22 min	After walk
5	5 min	15 min	5 min	25 min	After walk
6	5 min	18 min	5 min	28 min	After walk
7	5 min	21 min	5 min	31 min	After walk
8	5 min	24 min	5 min	34 min	After walk
9	5 min	27 min	5 min	37 min	After walk
10	5 min	30 min	5 min	40 min	After walk
11	5 min	33 min	5 min	43 min	After walk
12	5 min	35 min	5 min	45 min	After walk

Type: There are many different types of activities for all fitness levels - something for everybody! Try walking, cycling, water aerobics, swimming, dancing, low-impact aerobics, hiking, jogging, skating, stair stepping, tennis, rowing, cross-country skiing, trampoline, jumping rope, basketball, soccer, exercise videos or classes at your local community education departments, community colleges and fitness facilities.

Step It Up: Using a Pedometer

A pedometer is a step counter worn on your waist to measure the number of steps you take during routine activities and while exercising. It's a fun way to measure your activity level throughout the day and set small goals for yourself. It's really motivating to see those steps add up — and see your energy level rise as your fitness improves.

How to Use a Pedometer

- Wear your pedometer on your waist, attached to your belt, skirt or pants (even your underclothes as long as it fits snugly against your body.)
- Put your pedometer on when you first get up and wear it all day long. At the end of the day, record the number of steps you accumulated then press the reset button to return the step counts back to "0" for the next day.
- First, get an idea of your baseline activity level by recording the number of steps you take without changing your normal routine.
- Once you know your baseline, set step goals for yourself each day or each week. For example, you could decide to increase by 500 steps or by 10%.
- Watch the steps add up when you pace while you talk on the phone, walk a flight of stairs, skip a half hour TV program to walk the dog, walk instead of drive, park further or window shop with friends instead of sitting to talk.
- Not all activities can be counted in steps (for example, swimming or yoga) but they still count toward your fitness.

Using a pedometer for simple, accurate feedback will motivate you to take a step in the right direction.