

WALKING TOWARDS WELLNESS



Frequently Asked Questions

What are the *first steps* I should take in my walking program?

Before you get started, you should consult your primary care physician to inform him/her that you will be starting a walking program. Please ask whether they have any specific recommendations for you. In addition, you should definitely seek advice if you have any current medical conditions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have a heart condition that your doctor recommends only medically supervised physical activity?
- During or right after you exercise, do you have chest pains or pressure in the left or mid-chest area, left neck, shoulder or arm?
- Have you developed chest pain within the last month?
- Do you ever become dizzy and lose your balance, or lose consciousness?
- Do you feel extremely breathless after mild exertion?
- Has your doctor recommended you take medicine for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
- Has your doctor told you that you have bone or joint problems that could be made worse by the proposed physical activity?
- Do you have a medical condition or other physical reason not mentioned that might need special attention in a walking program?
- Are you middle-aged or older and have not been physically active, and are planning on participating in a fairly moderate exercise program?¹

If any of these conditions apply to you, consult your doctor before starting the program.

When should I walk?

You must find the time of day that best suits your schedule and lifestyle. Many people find walking first thing in the morning to be best—they don't procrastinate or get too busy and just skip it later in the day. Others incorporate a walking workout into their work day by walking at breaks or lunches or right after work. Still others walk in the afternoon or evening and clear their mind after a hard day at work or at home. Is there a best time to walk? YES—you should commit to a time to walk that works best for you and your schedule.

¹American Heart Association, Just Move, 2002.

Should I walk with a partner?

One of the best ways to make and keep a schedule is to do it with a walking partner. A partner is a great motivator to help you get out the door since you will always have somebody waiting for you. When selecting a walking partner, make sure they are committed to the walking program. However, don't limit yourself to humans—dogs are some of the best, friendliest and most motivating partners. You will provide a great workout not only for you, but also for your buddy, to keep everyone in shape!

What is the proper walking attire?

The most important item you will need is a good pair of sneakers. You should wear comfortable sneakers specifically made for walking. They provide a thick, flexible sole that cushions the foot and absorbs shock for the rest of the body. Also, make sure that the shoes provide enough room for your toes so they can spread out as they push off the ground.

In warmer weather you want to wear loose, comfortable cotton clothing or other porous clothing materials that will allow sweat to evaporate and keep you dry. During the colder months, be sure to layer your clothing to keep out the cold and wind. The best materials to wear are fleece-lined cotton, wool or a breathable nylon.

Where should I walk?

Anywhere! That is the greatest thing about walking! You can walk around your neighborhood, at an outdoor or indoor school track or recreation center, on a treadmill, around town, or along scenic routes in your area. And when the weather is bad, you can move your walking indoors. Shopping malls are a popular alternative, and many have programs already in place for walkers.

Always remember safety first! Walk in the daytime or at night in well-lighted areas. Be aware of your surroundings, avoid wearing headphones since they will make you less alert, don't walk in or near overgrown or deserted areas, and if possible, always walk with a buddy.

Should I use hand weights while walking?

No. Hand weights are a great part of an exercise program, but use them to exercise 5-10 minutes *after* your walk. Carrying weights will not provide the resistance needed to tone your muscles but can increase your blood pressure, place strain on ligaments and tendons and may contribute to joint problems. You will actually be able to walk faster without carrying the weights, therefore getting a better workout. Anyone with a history of heart disease should not use hand weights.²

²The Walking Site, FAQ



How do I set goals for this program?

It is important to remember to set realistic and measurable goals. You will have to know how fit you are now and what is possible. For weight loss, do not set a goal of losing more than 1-2 pounds a week or 5-10 pounds a month, and plan for plateaus along the way. For increasing speed and distance, plan for increasing no more than 10-15% a week in order to prevent injury and allow muscles to repair and build.

The essentials to goal setting involve the **SMART** method:

Specific—Specific goals help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what we are going to do. Ensure the goals you set are very specific, clear and easy. They should state exactly **what** you want to achieve, **how** you're going to do it and **when** you will achieve the goal.

General goal: I want to start exercising.

Specific goal: "By March 30th, I will join a walking club and walk 4 days a week for 30 minutes a day."

Measurable—A goal will not help you if there's no way of telling whether you've achieved it. For each goal you set, establish concrete criteria for measuring progress. This makes it easy to see if you hit your target. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and can enjoy the excitement of achieving your goal.

Measurable goal: I will increase my time walking by 3 minutes each week.

Attainable—An attainable goal has an outcome that is realistic given your current situation, resources and time available. You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. A goal should challenge you and require effort and commitment on your part to achieve it, but it should not be impossible to complete.

Unattainable goal: I will lose 60lbs during the 12-week walking program.

Attainable goal: I will lose 20lbs during the 12-week walking program.

Realistic—To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are both willing and able to work. Don't plan to do things you are unlikely to follow through on due to the nature or amount of effort that it will require. Start small, with what you know you can do, and gradually begin to set more challenging goals for yourself.

Unrealistic goal: I will walk one hour every day during the first week of the program.

Realistic goal: I will walk 15 minutes, for 2 days the first week, and then increase my walking by 3 minutes each week. I will be walking 3 days each week by the third week of the program.



Timely—Be sure to set deadlines for your goals: by the end of the first week, in one month, by Memorial Day, etc. Putting an end point on your goals gives you a clear target to work towards. If you don't set a timeframe, the commitment is left too vague. In addition, you should be sure to give yourself enough time to achieve the specific goal.

Timely goals: I will walk 500 minutes by June 1st.
I will lose 6 pounds in 30 days.
I will complete a 5-mile walk by September 30th.

Will I lose weight during the program?

Regular exercise is the best way to get the body burning more calories. That's because during physical activity, such as walking, you burn calories in order to fuel the body. Not only does walking itself use up calories, but it raises the body's overall metabolism to use the calories up at a higher rate.

However, weight loss is not a matter of exercise alone. Eating a healthy and nutritious diet is necessary to help the body lose weight at a safe, moderate pace and also make it more likely that the weight loss will be maintained over a long period of time.

When it comes to losing weight, an important aspect is calorie balance. Calories burned have to be more than calories taken in through our diet. One pound of body fat is equal to approximately 3,500 calories. Therefore, to lose a pound a week (500 calories x 7 days), you would have to burn 500 extra calories a day! It would be difficult to do that through exercise alone, so healthy eating will help you to be on your way to lowering your caloric intake each day and lose weight.

What are some easy ways I can cut calories out of my diet?

Small changes to your diet can make a big difference! Maybe cutting the cream out of your coffee seems like a small feat to you, but once you've got that down you can add another small feat, then another. When it comes to eating fewer calories, it also depends on another aspect... portion control! The best way to take in fewer calories is to cut back on your meal portions as well as learning what a serving size is of the foods that you eat. Here are some other tips on how to cut out calories.

- Read food labels.
- Limit high-calorie beverages—i.e. soda, iced tea, specialty coffee drinks.
- Cut back on condiments such as mayonnaise and butter.
- Broil, bake, roast, boil, or stir-fry instead of frying.
- Use nonstick oil spray to eliminate the use of butter and oils.
- Lower your intake of candy, chocolate and high-sugar foods.
- Pour a serving size of cookies, chips, or crackers onto a plate or into a bowl. Don't eat directly out of the bag, box, can or container.
- Don't "waist" calories on foods that aren't fabulous.
- Don't feel you always have to be a member of the clean plate club.



- Eat more slowly. Rushing through meals doesn't give your brain adequate time to signal you when you are full.
- When dining out, request salad dressing and sauces to be served on the side so you can control the amount you eat.
- Remember—**Always** eat breakfast! It is the most important meal of the day! Breakfast gets your metabolism running and will help your body burn calories more efficiently throughout the day.

Should I weigh myself?

This is not a required element of the program, but consider weighing yourself and/or measuring your arms, legs and waist before you start. You may be surprised to notice the difference in how your clothes fit or the weight loss at the end of this challenge!

Why do I have to stretch?

Stretching is just as important as exercise and is an essential step in your workout. Stretching prevents muscle soreness and possible injury. Proper stretching will also assist your workout by doing the following:

- Loosen muscles and joints.
- Prevent muscle pulls and tears.
- Increase mobility and improve circulation.
- Lead to efficient calorie burning by increasing your body temperature.
- Increase your metabolic rate so oxygen is delivered to the working muscles more quickly.

What is the proper way to stretch?

Stretching should be done for the first and last 5-10 minutes of each workout. Stretching should be steady, making sure that you are not bouncing. You should move slowly while you stretch, and when you feel the first sign of tension, hold that position for 10-30 seconds, then relax. Repeat each stretch a few times. While you are stretching you should not feel any pain, so make sure that you are not pushing the stretch too far.

Examples of stretches:

Side Reaches

Reach one arm over your head and to the side. Keep your hips steady and your shoulders straight to the side. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat on other side.

Knee Pull

Lean your back against a wall. Keep your head, hips and knee in a straight line. Pull one knee to your chest. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat with other knee.



Wall Push

Lean your hands on a wall with your feet about 3-4 feet away from the wall. Bend one knee and point it toward the wall. Keep your back leg straight with your foot flat and your toes pointed straight ahead. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat with opposite leg.

Leg Curl

Pull your right foot to your buttocks with your right hand. Keep your knee pointing straight to the ground. Hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat with left foot.

How can I keep my walking program from turning into a walking rut?

The best tools to get on track and keep progressing are setting goals, tracking your progress and celebrating successes. Here are some suggestions to keep on walking.

Join a walking club

Area clubs give you many opportunities to make walking friends, and virtual clubs can also help keep your interest in walking.

Walking events

Enjoy the non-competitive walking events or fund raisers for disease prevention—i.e. Walk for the Cure. There are group events as well as self-guided trails you can do anytime.

Take a Mind Walk

Spice up your walk with activities to relieve stress, stay motivated and nourish your soul.

Racewalk

When regular walking loses its thrill, maybe you need the workout, muscle building, and speed of racewalking. Imagine passing runners in a 10K run while walking—it happens when you learn to racewalk, even for beginners.

How will I continue to walk after the program ends?

The following tips are essential in developing a lifelong habit:

- Set clear and realistic goals.
- Keep yourself on a schedule.
- Monitor your progress and reward yourself for success!
- Keep it interesting! Change your walking pattern, change your walking partner, the time of day, etc.

What are my resources?

Please refer to the separate handout entitled Resource List located in the participant packet.

