

Walking Workout

Tip Sheet For Healthy Living Peer Leaders



How You Walk Matters!

Even though most of us have been walking since we were a year old, we don't always walk in a way that promotes fitness and protects us from injury.

To improve your walking technique:

- Walk with good posture - chin up and shoulders slightly back. Think tall. Keep a neutral spine with the head stacked over shoulders over hips over knees over feet.
- With each step, make your heel touch the ground first. Reach out your leg with your knee, heel, and toe pointed forward in the direction of travel.
- Use smooth movements, rolling over the ball of your foot onto your toes. One foot will bear all your weight until your other heel strikes the ground.
- Swing arms naturally at your sides. For more intensity and upper body toning, bend your arms to a 90-degree angle, keep elbows close to your body, and raise your hands no higher than chest level.
- Breathe normally (in 1-2 out 1-2).

Comfort and Safety Tips

- If you cannot walk and talk without becoming breathless, slow down.
- Listen to your body. If you feel pain, dizziness, nausea, or sickness of any kind of, stop exercising. If the symptoms do not go away, consult your health care provider.
- Do proper warm up and cool down exercises. (*See Karrie or your Walk this Way walking guide for tips.*)
- Drink small amounts of water before, during and after your walk. This is particularly important in warm weather and when you are sweating heavily.
- Walk with a friend for pleasure and safety.
- If walking alone, tell someone your route and when you expect to return.
- Walk during the day or on well lit streets.
- Dress in layers so that you can adjust for weather conditions.

Suggestions for Increasing Difficulty

- Add moderate to fast paced, timed intervals (i.e. 30 seconds fast- 1 minute moderate).
- As you become stronger, take fewer breaks.
- Increase the time of your brisk walk.
- Find a route that includes some hills.

Staying Motivated

The most critical period to sticking with a physical activity program is the first two to four weeks. Plan to maintain your walking program for at least a month to give yourself a fair chance of "sticking with it". Most people notice positive changes in about four to eight weeks. Some ideas to keep you moving include:

- Make specific plans to walk and write them down. Include when, where, with whom, how long, how hard and how often.
- Add activity to your life. Walk during coffee breaks. Park in the far corners of parking lots and enjoy the walk to where you are going.
- Walk with a friend or dog. It will encourage you to walk even on days when you feel "lazy".
- Encourage family members to walk with you.
- Try a daily positive walking affirmation to repeat to yourself such as "Walking makes me look great and feel great".
- Keep an exercise log and plot your progress.
- Vary your walking route, the setting you walk in, or your walking partner to add variety and interest.
- If you slip off the program, forgive yourself and begin again. Don't give up and avoid the all or none pitfall.
- Reward yourself. Each month, particularly for the first 6 months, reward yourself for sticking with your walking program goals.
- Take a mental vacation. Use your walking time to think about pleasant things. Avoid using the

time to ponder family problems or bills. It is essential to feel good about what you are doing.

- Take a personal music player to listen to.

References: Above information obtained from WDG in motion website. Retrieved September 2008 from www.wdginmotion.ca

Walking Clubs

Walking clubs offer the chance to meet new people. They can help keep you motivated by providing a weekly walking date. Try joining a local walking club such as the Onward Willow Walking Club!

Pedometers

If you are using a pedometer as part of your walking workout routine, this chart can help you determine your activity level. Experts suggest walking at 10,000 steps daily to achieve health benefits.

Goal	Daily Steps
Highly active	10, 000 – 16, 000
Active	10, 000
Somewhat active	7,000 – 9,999
Low active	4,000 – 7, 000

Establish your baseline of daily steps. Increase your number of steps by 500 each week until you reach your goal.

Reference: Above information obtained from Walking: the Activity of a Lifetime. Retrieved September 2008 from www.lin.ca