

# WALKING TIPS

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Walking reduces blood pressure, lowers the levels of "bad LDL" cholesterol in your blood, tones up your muscles and strengthens your bones. It is an excellent form of exercise for persons who wish to lose weight or simply improve their overall fitness level.

Brisk walking is an ideal way to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. A recent study found that men who take regular brisk walks have less than half the rate of heart disease and heart attacks than those that do not.

How you can train without realizing it Build a walk into your journey to work, walk to the train / park away from the office.

Aim to walk to the shops, or any other short journeys.

Enjoy the fresh air and countryside, take the family and dog (your best fitness) friend out for long steady walks.

## How to walk (briskly)

A 90 degree bend in your arm makes your arms a shorter pendulum, so they can swing faster as your step speeds up. At normal speed allow your arms to swing freely and rhythmically, remembering that your arm speed controls your leg speed.

Quicker, smaller steps will cover more ground, than long strides, which tire your muscles. Resist the temptation to lengthen your stride to go faster.

Strike the floor with the heel of your shoe, roll onto the ball of your foot and aim to push off with your toes.

Avoid bending over, looking down on the floor, stay tall with your head up, checking for obstacles that are in your path.

Control your breathing, take full breaths and exhale completely.

When walking uphill, take smaller strides, leaning into the hill. If the hill is really steep, traverse (zig zag) up it to make it easier on your legs.

## How long should I walk for?

To maintain health with regular physical activity: Walk for 20 - 30+ minutes' duration's most days of the week at a "talking" pace.

Weight management: Walk for 30 - 45+ minutes at a comfortable pace for as many days as possible. Aim to keep the pace constant, being able to talk throughout, however finish slightly out of breath.

Cardiovascular fitness: Walk 20+ minutes at a fast pace, ideally over slightly hilly terrain, aim for 2-3 sessions per week, increasing both your breathing and heart rate, whilst staying in a comfortable condition.

Exercise should never be painful, if you feel any severe pain, see your doctor immediately, telling them your symptoms.

## Before you start

Make sure that you are ready physically by seeing your doctor, especially if you have been sedentary for a while and/or have any condition which could be affected by exercise, such as high blood pressure.

Warm-up and stretch the lower body, especially the calves. See the section on stretching in the Fitness section of the web site. Perform a gradual 5 minute walk then stretch. Likewise on completion stretch out again to help prevent muscle soreness and strain in your muscles.

### Don't forget:

- ✓ Snacks; if you are walking for more than an hour, keep your blood sugar up with healthy snacks such as apples.
- ✓ First Aid kit; containing plasters and if possible blister treatment kits.
- ✓ Strong stick; useful for giving support whilst walking, and also in need of protection.
- ✓ Fluid if going on long walks, hot in a flask if weather is cold.
- ✓ Sun cream and sun glasses if the weather is nice.

## Staying Motivated

Choose different routes to walk, taking in the scenery and if possible the odd photograph of where you have been.

Walk with a partner, or better still join a walking group in your area, there are plenty around. If you can't find one, start one, I'm sure you will have people that will want to get out and enjoy the benefits of walking.

Monitor your increase in fitness, and how you feel both during your walk, and in everyday life. Make the walk a time to think about your life, feel positive about yourself, and ban any negative feelings.

The key to keeping fit whilst walking is to keep it regular and increase your efforts slowly at your own pace.

Obviously the faster you walk, the more calories you will burn in a given time, however if you walk too fast you can soon become tired. Walking is a pastime where time should not be an issue; getting fit and being in the fresh air should be your main goal.