Exercise: Walking for Wellness

Regular aerobic activity lowers your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. It helps you stay at a healthy weight. And it can help you deal with stress and sleep better.

How do you get started?

Start with a reason to walk. If you have a reason, you're more likely to walk.

Set an easy goal. A daily or weekly goal can motivate you. Use the form that follows to list your reasons and goals.

Walk a little more every day. Try to walk for at least 2½ hours a week. One way to do this is to walk at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. If time is a problem, walk in blocks of 10 minutes or more at one time.

Walk fast enough to get health benefits. You don't have to racewalk or run. Walk briskly enough to increase your heart rate and breathing, but not so fast that you can't talk comfortably.

Why should you walk?

Walking can improve your health. It is a form of aerobic activity, which means it increases your heart rate for an extended time.

Your personal action plan

A personal action plan gives you a place to write down your reasons to walk and to set goals. For example, you may want to walk to lose a few pounds or because you want to join a community walk. Examples of goals are walking 15 minutes a day or walking to work 3 times a week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal action plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My reason for wanting to walk is:</td>
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| My goal for this (week or month) is: |
What can help keep you walking?
Once you've started walking, you want to keep doing it. Here are some ways to stay on track:

**Walk with others**
- Ask family members, friends, and coworkers to join you. Decide where and how far you want to walk together.
- Take a walk instead of staying inside when you meet a friend.
- Join a walking group or club.
- Set a goal to take part in an organized fitness walk.
- Walk a dog every day.
- Plan family outings around walks. You'll set an example your children can follow as they grow older.

**Walk whenever you can**
- Schedule walks on your daily calendar.
- Instead of watching TV or using the computer, go out for a walk.
- At work, get up and move around once an hour. Instead of emailing or phoning a coworker, walk over.
- Try to walk to work or school or when doing errands. You could walk a lap around the grocery store or the mall before you start shopping.
- Park farther away from work or other places you're going.
- Walk during TV commercials.

Be safe while walking
- Check with your doctor before you start a walking plan if you have heart problems or other health issues, or you have not been active in a long time.
- Know your surroundings. Walk in a well-lighted, safe place.
- Carry a cell phone for emergencies.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that cushion your feet.
- If you worry about tripping or losing your balance, walk on smooth sidewalks and paths.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after walking. Take a water bottle with you when you walk.

Try a pedometer
A pedometer counts how many steps you take. How does this help you?
- You may be more motivated to walk. If you know how many steps you're taking, you may want to walk more.
- You can set goals for daily or weekly steps with a pedometer. You can easily track your goals and adjust them.
- You may walk more. A quick check may show that you need more steps to meet a goal. You can then add steps to your day.