

10,000 Steps to Better Health

Current medical and scientific evidence shows that exercise is a useful way to improve general health, minimise the pain and limitations of arthritis and other conditions. It is now recognised that some symptoms associated with arthritis and chronic pain, maybe simply due to a lack of exercise.

To get the full benefit, your exercise program needs to include stretching, strengthening and aerobic conditioning. Flexibility exercises move the joints and muscles through their full range of motion and can help overcome stiffness and are complemented by strengthening exercises that increase the strength of muscles which move, support and protect joints. Aerobic or endurance exercise enhances your overall fitness and sense of well-being by stimulating your heart, lungs and muscles.

The 10,000 Step Walking Program

Walking is a great aerobic exercise and the latest research indicates that walking an accumulated 10,000 steps a day is equivalent to the recommended goal of 30 minutes of daily physical activity. Most of the benefit comes from the first 6000 steps accumulated during the day. To burn off extra calories for weight loss, most people need to walk at least 10,000 steps per day, on most days of the week.

The 10,000 steps walking program uses a pedometer to count the steps you take in ordinary activity and dedicated daily walks and allows you to monitor your progress and establish new personal health goals.

Walking is cheap, doesn't require any fancy equipment, gyms, health clubs or participation in scheduled activity. Instead, you walk the calories away, when, where and with whom you want.

What are the benefits of exercise?

- Regular physical activity can also reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer and diabetes;
- Exercise also improves mental health, the health of bones, muscles & joints, improves sleep and pain control.
- Increased physical activity has direct health benefits by increasing energy, reducing stress and improving weight control.
- An additional 'bonus' for sedentary persons is that the greatest health benefits from increased activity appear to accrue when the least active become moderately active.

Why use a pedometer?

It is a useful motivational tool which will help you monitor your daily activity level. By providing you with instant feedback, a pedometer will enable you to set realistic measurable personal goals towards becoming more physically active. While they are not NASA accurate, pedometers give a fairly honest readout and can be used as a tool to help you gauge how much physical activity you are accumulating through out your day.

Where do I begin?

It is advisable to check with your physician prior to beginning a new program of physical activity, particularly if you have a heart disease, diabetes or other chronic disease.

It is advisable to wear your pedometer for a few "test days" to determine your starting point. I recommend commencing your 10,000 step walking program from 80% of this baseline value, increasing by 10% every 4-7 days. The daily "quota" can be divided into multiple small walks if needed to decrease post activity discomfort while still achieving most of the benefit. The first goal is 10,000 steps and then we decide if it is further or faster. It is important to walk regularly. This graded increase is very important; if you only increase by 5%, it takes a longer time to achieve your

goal and if you increase by 20%, it increases the chance of a flare-up with a "crash and burn" setback. A sample training log is attached to enable you to chart your progress.

Ways to increase the number of steps taken per day.

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Take the dog for a walk
- Park further away from entrances
- Get up from your desk and take a three-minute walk every hour
- Deliver things to co-workers in person instead of using interoffice mail or e-mail
- Walk the perimeter of the field while your children play soccer
- Use a cordless phone and walk while you talk
- Walk during commercial breaks
- Walk in your lunch hour

What about activities other than walking?

Any activity is good activity and is better than no activity. However cycling, swimming and hydrotherapy are particularly good and can be easily increased in a graded fashion similar to the 10,000 step walking program using a distance or time measure.

You may also find it helpful to perform some warm-up stretching exercises before going for a walk in and to practice relaxation during the cool down phase after a walk.

Using a Pedometer

The key to a 10,000 step daily walking program is the pedometer. This tiny device is attached to your waist and counts the number of steps you take during the day.

1. Press the "MODE" button until a line appears under the "STEP" part of the display. This will ensure that you are counting the number of steps you are taking during the day.
2. When you get dressed in the morning, attach the cricket to your waist. It is important to attach it so the unit is parallel to the ground and has level as possible. It may be possible to attach the cricket to your belt, pants or skirt.
3. Test the click or by pressing the reset button with the unit attached to your waist. Walk several steps keeping track of the number and then compare that number: what is displayed.
4. Check your pedometer throughout the day to determine how many steps you have taken. The first goal is 10,000 steps, we then decide whether increased the steps or go faster.

Your pedometer is more than just a counter.

In your pedometer can do much more than measure the number of steps taken. To measure the distance walked and calories expended, simply follow the instructions included with your pedometer.

Points to remember.

Make a commitment to walk your daily "quota" of steps/distance.

Be realistic with your goals.

Start small, with easily achievable steps/distance, build up gradually and steadily.

Include a variety of activities

Exercise induced pain lasting more than two hours after walking indicates you have "overdone it".

Do not exercise a painful, inflamed joint

Consult a physiotherapist or doctor if you have any concerns

15 Ways to Walk

Have you noticed how many brands of cereal there are? They take up an entire aisle in a supermarket-sometimes more. And how about orange juice? No pulp, some pulp, lots of pulp, beaten to pulp ... All this variety made us wonder why walking has been overlooked. If there were more "brands" of walk to choose from, maybe it would be easier to get out there more often. So here are 15 new types, guaranteed to keep you motivated, get you fit and even confer some unexpected benefits. Pick your favourites and get moving.

A good walk can be for "me" time, "us" time or "what does it all mean" time, as long as you are out there.

1 The Meet-You-There Walk

Instead of driving with your partner to the local shops, leave a bit earlier and meet him/her there - then catch a ride back home.

First Step If you normally walk a 5 km loop in the neighbourhood, draw a circle on a map extending that far out in all directions from your home. This is your sphere of possibility (and it'll grow larger as you get fitter). That feeling of purpose and independence you will gain from doing this type of walk will eventually lead to ...

2 The Errand Walk

Instead of just walking to get in shape, once or twice a week, walk to get things done. The ATM, the supermarket, the Post Office, the beauty salon ... This is healthy, stress-free and multi-tasking.

First Step You will need something to carry your stuff, so borrow a backpack, or take a couple of those eco-friendly, non-woven, 100% recyclable bags you can get from most supermarket check-outs these days.

3 The Figure-It-out Walk

There's something about putting one foot in front of the other that focuses the mind and brings clarity. A problem that might have overwhelmed you originally, or one that appeared to have no clear solution, will often solve itself during a brisk walk.

First Step Don't dwell on the problem. Instead, think about it at the beginning, then let it go. Your subconscious mind will keep working on it, and before long, a solution will appear. Magic.

4 The Reverse Walk

We are creatures of habit. Break yours by occasionally walking your normal route in the opposite direction. It not only beat boredom, but it will wake you up to the world around you by helping you see things from fresh angles.

First Step Go left instead of right when you take your 1st step. Make it a point to notice 3 things you never noticed when walking in your normal direction-and don't forget how to get home!

5 The Going-Nowhere-Fast Walk

For those days when the weather is too bleak and your timetable is even bleaker, head to the gym or your spare bedroom for a treadmill walk. No groaning, please. We know how boring this can be. So ...

First Step Get a large-scale map of your state or some exotic country. Then, after each workout, highlight the distance you've covered across it. The next time someone asks how you got it in such great shape, reply: "By walking from here to Cairns!"

6 The Better-Marriage Walk

Worried that you and your spouse don't talk any more? Walking together can help. Exercise makes us more open, emotional and honest, plus it guarantees full attention.

First Step Keep it low key to start. Discussing things you notice along the way, interesting items in the news, etc. Then, once he/she has warmed up, broach the more serious stuff. Hold hands. If you're lucky, this outing will eventually morph into ...

7 The Better-Sex Walk

Believe it or not, the tongue is the most important sex organ (and we don't mean that way you may assume). Communication promotes closeness. Plus, exercise naturally spikes libido by making us more aware of our bodies and helping us feel better about ourselves.

First Step Work up a sweat. That healthy glow is sexy. And don't be shy about occasionally talking suggestively. You'll both pick up the pace as you make the turn for home.

8 The Boss Walk

For your next performance review, suggest something that will get your boss's attention. Instead of sitting in an office where you'll feel intimidated, level the playing field and promote a

more honest discourse by suggesting you take it outside.

First Step If the Big Man (or Woman) likes the idea, tell them you have many many more-then tactfully ask for a raise. If you're turned down, then later that night go for ...

9 The Whinge Walk

When something is really making you angry, Punch out a few laps instead of the wall. You'll not only get a great workout (the adrenaline will naturally make you walk faster), but you'll also burn off some of the stress hormones coursing through your body.

First Step So as not to attract undue public attention, by ranting and gesturing to yourself, invite along someone who understands the situation. You'll be amazed at just how much better you feel afterwards.

10 The Virtual Walk

Studies show that you can actually get muscle fibres to fire by imagining yourself performing an activity. It's the same technique basketball players used to mentally rehearse free-throws.

First Step On days when your too busy to escape for a walk, at least spend a few quiet minutes with your eyes closed, envisioning yourself striding strongly and purposefully. It will help develop muscle memory that'll make you more efficient when you do get out and about for a walk.

11 The Rainy Day Walk

Many people go into hibernation at the first sign of precipitation. But there's something about walking in the rain that is simultaneously calming and exhilarating.

First Step Make a point of leaving the umbrella at home. Instead, don some waterproof shoes and a big raincoat with a hood. Occasionally turn your face up to the sky to catch a few raindrops on your tongue.

12 The Mini-Walk

If your days to pack for usual 45-minute walk, then take three 15-minute ones. You will derive just as much of a health benefit, plus you'll keep some of your metabolism cranking

throughout the day so that you burn more kilojoules.

First Step Look for opportunities to be active rather than to "exercise". A difference. The latter often feels like an interruption to the day, while the former is a welcome part of it. Shift your mindset.

13 The Business-Meeting Walk

Who decreed that all corporate meetings must take place in a beige conference room with a minimum of 20 PowerPoint slides in small type? No wonder everyone falls asleep. Next time, If the meeting isn't too large, hold it on the hoof.

First Step If the boss is sceptical, tell him/her that exercise boosts creativity, productivity and morale. Bonus: you won't need catering.

14 The Park and Walk

Live too far from work to commute by foot? Then occasionally drive until you are a couple of kilometres away, park, and walk the rest. You'll fit in your exercise almost without realising it, save on petrol and effectively install stress-easing bookends around your work day.

First Step Keep a few days' worth of clothes at work. Leave home in casual gear and walking shoes, then change into your business closed just before you clock on for the day.

15 The Teenage Walk

This is similar to The Better-Marriage Walk in that your essentially taking someone who's uncommunicative and getting them to open up.

First Step Tell your son or daughter that you're going to the supermarket, and ask if they'd like to come along and pick out some food. (Teen metabolisms can't resist an offer like this.) When you head for the car, say you're walking and invite them along. Bingo.

From Healthsmart December2010

Your Personal Step Log

Post This Sheet On The Fridge At Home,
Others May Be Encouraged By Your Efforts



Month: _____

Goals for the month: _____



Check the heart when you have a 10,000 Step Day.

Goal: 1 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 2 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 3 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 4 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 5 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 6 Steps: Minutes:
Goal: 7 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 8 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 9 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 10 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 11 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 12 Steps: Minutes:
Goal: 13 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 14 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 15 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 16 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 17 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 18 Steps: Minutes:
Goal: 19 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 20 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 21 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 22 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 23 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 24 Steps: Minutes:
Goal: 25 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 26 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 27 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 28 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 29 Steps: Minutes:	Goal: 30 Steps: Minutes:
Goal: 31 Steps: Minutes:	Monthly Total: _____				

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Physical Activity
Every Step Counts