

Walking

Walking Builds Aerobic Fitness at both High and Moderate Intensity

By Wendy Bumgardner, About.com

Benefits of walking

Walking, like other exercise, can help you achieve a number of important health benefits. Walking can help you:

- Lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol)
- Raise high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol)
- Lower your blood pressure
- Reduce your risk of or manage type 2 diabetes
- Manage your weight
- Improve your mood
- Stay strong and fit

Source: www.mayoclinic.com

Walk Faster or Walk More Often?

Does walking build aerobic fitness? Do you have to be huffing and puffing to get any aerobic benefit? A study in the Nov. 14, 2005 issue of the "Archives of Internal Medicine" confirms that walking builds aerobic fitness at both moderate and high intensity.

Walking Intensity vs. Frequency

Moderate Intensity Walking: Walking at 45-55% of maximum heart rate, an intensity at which you may be breathing a little harder than usual but able to keep up a full conversation.

High Intensity Walking: Walking at 65-75% of maximum heart rate. You are able to speak only in short sentences.

Low Frequency Walking: 3-4 times a week for 30 minutes a session.

High Frequency Walking: 5-7 times

a week for 30 minutes a session.

Walk More or Walk Faster for Aerobic Fitness

Improvements in aerobic fitness were seen in the study group for those who walked with high intensity, either with low frequency or high frequency. But similar benefits for aerobic fitness were also seen for those walking at moderate intensity and high frequency.

"The findings demonstrate that significant improvements in cardio respiratory fitness can be achieved and maintained over 24 months via exercise counseling with a prescription for walking 30 minutes per day, either at a moderate intensity five to seven days per week, or at a hard intensity three to four days per week," Glen E. Duncan, Ph.D., R.C.E.P.S.M., of the University of Washington, Seattle, and colleagues concluded.



Does walking build aerobic fitness?

Reference: (*Arch Intern Med.* 2005; 165: 2362-2369.)

Source: www.about.com

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Preparation Prevents Injury

Take time to prepare yourself to prevent injuries, such as blisters on your feet or muscle pain.

Wear walking shoes and comfortable, protective clothing:

Before you set out, be sure to select comfortable footwear. Also dress in loose fitting, comfortable clothing and in layers if you need to adjust to changing temperature. If you walk outside, choose clothes appropriate for the weather. Avoid rubberized materials, as they don't allow perspiration to evaporate. Wear bright colors or reflective tape after dark so that motorists can see you.

Warm up:

Spend about five minutes walking slowly to warm up your muscles. You can walk in place if you want. Increase your pace until you feel warm.

Stretch:

After warming up, stretch your muscles before walking. Include the calf stretch, quadriceps stretch, hamstring stretch and side (iliotibial) stretch.

Cool down after each walking session:

To reduce stress on your heart and muscles, end each walking session

by walking slowly for about five minutes. Then, repeat your stretches.

Source: www.mayoclinic.com



Warm-up exercises for 3-10 minutes gently gets the blood circulating.



“Before you start walking, it is important to warm up first and it is worth doing just a few minutes of stretching after each walk, when muscles are the most warm and compliant.”



Cool down exercises slow the heart rate and stretch warm muscles.

Pre-Walk Warm-Up Routine

Before you start walking, it is important to warm up first. Increasing the temperature in your muscles and joints and increasing blood flow will make you more comfortable when you exercise and reduce the risk of injury.

Mark Fenton has developed a few easy warm-up moves that target the muscles you use most during walking. You can do them all in a standing position and the entire routine should take only three minutes.

Ankle circles: Standing on one foot, lift the other leg off the ground in front of you. Slowly flex that ankle through its full range of motion, making circles with the toes. Do 6 to 8 circles then reverse the direction of your circle and do 6 to 8 more. Switch feet and repeat.

Leg swings: Standing on one leg, swing the other leg loosely from the hip in a front to back motion. Keep it relaxed and unforced like the swinging of a pendulum. Your foot should swing no higher than a foot or so off the ground. Do 15 to 20 swings on each leg.

Figure-8 leg swings: Just like the leg swings above, swing one leg from the hip in a front to back motion, but this time, trace a figure-8 with your leg. Your leg should trace a circle in front of the body and another circle behind. Do 15 to 20 swings on each leg.

Pelvic loops: Stand with your hands on your hips, your knees gently bent, and your feet hip-width apart. Keep your body upright and make 10 slow, con-

tinuous circles with your hips, pushing them gently forward, to the left, back and to the right. Then reverse directions and repeat.

Arm circles: Hold both arms straight out to your sides, making yourself into the letter T. Make 10 to 12 slow backward circles with your hands, starting small and finishing with large circles, using your entire arm. Shake out your arms, then repeat with 10 to 12 forward circles.

Hula-hoop jumps: Begin hopping in place on both feet. Keep your head and shoulders facing forward, and begin to twist your feet and lower body left, then right, going back and forth on successive hops, 20 times.

Source: www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/healthprewalk.html

3 Minute Post Walk Stretch Routine

There's no need to be super flexible, but it is worth doing just a few minutes of stretching after each walk, when your muscles are the most warm and compliant. That's enough to help maintain your mobility and a healthy range of movement, and it's likely to reduce the chance of injuries or limitations, especially as your walking becomes more varied and vigorous. Here are three simple, stand up stretches you can do any place, after any walk.

Do all of these stretches slowly, never to the point of discomfort; hold each stretch for six to eight slow, deep breaths. Begin each stretch standing up, and feel free to rest one hand on something for balance if necessary. If you have time, go through the cycle twice.

Calf and hip stretch: Take a giant step forward with your left foot. Bend your left knee (but don't push it beyond your foot) and keep your right heel on the ground and your right leg straight behind you. Keep your abdominal muscles gently contracted so there's no excess arch in your back, and you should feel the stretch in both your right calf and hip. Hold. Then switch legs and repeat.

Back and hamstring stretch: Stand with your feet together and your knees soft (not straightened). Lean forward from the waist and let your arms and head hang loosely toward the ground. Don't necessarily try to touch your toes -- just let your body

hang under its own weight, and let it ease into the stretch with each deep breath. Slowly stand up and repeat.

Shin and thigh stretch: Grasp your right toes with your left hand, and gently pull your foot up behind you, keeping your right knee pointed toward ground. Your heel does not have to reach your buttocks -- just pull to the point of feeling a gentle stretch in the front of the thigh, hip, and shin. Hold, then switch legs and repeat.

Source: www.pbs.org/americaswalking/health/health3minute.html



Guidelines For Buying Walking Shoes

By Ted Forcum, DC and Thomas Hyde, DC

There are three essential factors that should be taken into consideration before purchasing a new pair of walking shoes.

- **Stability**—the shoes should have a balanced and secure feel throughout range of motion.
- **Flexibility**—the shoes should allow for a good degree of give at the base of the toes, providing smooth motion.
- **Comfort**—walking shoes should comprise contours and padding conformed closely to the feet, providing a snug fit at the heel and midfoot, with ample room in the forefoot.

When trying on shoes for exercise walking, it is advisable to examine

the following four particular areas of walking shoes:

- **Heel counter**—the area of the shoe that holds the back of the heel, just underneath the Achilles tendon. This area should be snug but not tight, comfortably cupping the back of the heel. A good heel counter will help prevent the feet from over pronation or supination.
- **Midsole**—the area between the tread and the cloth upper of the shoe. This is the most important component of any footwear. Midsoles are made of a variety of materials that give the shoe greater or lesser degrees of cushioning, support, and flexibility.
- **Insole**—the area inside the shoe, on the bottom, where the

sole of the foot is in contact with the shoe. It should contour comfortably to the foot. It is designed to reduce shear forces between the foot and the shoe and provide some shock absorption.

- **Toe box**—the entire area that surrounds the toes. The toe box should provide adequate room for the toes to move freely. Wiggling and bending the toes at the knuckles should be unrestricted. Conversely, too much space will cause shifting and discomfort. There should be approximately one half to a full thumb's width between the end of the longest toe to the end of the toe box.

Source:

www.spine-health.com/wellness/exercise/walking-shoes-exercise-walking



Finding the proper walking shoe may take some time and a bit of money, but it is essential for achieving long and short term benefits.

Get Walking By Kate Hanley

Walk off weight, stress, tension—and create a more vital, calmer, happier you.

There's no question: The simple act of putting one foot in front of the other can transform your health. Research shows that a regular walking regimen decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure—even cognitive decline. On top of these impressive findings, many people who walk regularly report less stress, better sleep, more energy, and a sense of empowerment from taking an active role in their health. Easy on the knees and compatible with even the most hectic of schedules, walking may be considered the ultimate life enhancer.

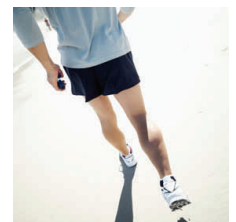
Here are some walking tips:

1. **Walking for fitness:** Walk 20 to 30 minutes at least 3 times a week or more.
2. **Walking for stress relief:** Find a quiet place (somewhere soothing—a lake instead of a busy road). Go easy (as if you don't need to get anywhere fast). Breathe away tension (take a deep inhale, and then with each exhale imagine releasing tightness in each part of your body, one part per exhale). Walk at least 15 minutes.
3. **Walk for better posture:** Lengthen the spine and back of your neck to bring your

shoulders to the proper position; allow your spine to unfurl. Gently draw your navel in toward your spine to strengthen and stabilize your core muscles. Release the glutes as you walk. Let your hips drift back slightly, so they can sway. Take smaller steps.

4. **Walking for inspiration:** Skip the distractions (wear comfortable clothes, leave the iPod at home. This helps you stay open and balanced so you can focus.) Visualize your dilemma, call up the issue or idea you need clarity on. Your mind will inevitably wonder, let it. Then gently guide your

thoughts back. This interplay between conscious thinking and unconscious thinking brings your whole brain into play and opens you up to inspiration. Take your time, according to Thom Hartmann, the average length of time people require to have a burst in creativity is 15 minutes, or about a mile of walking.



Source: *Body + Soul Magazine*

