

Employee Health hurdles

Walking March 31, 2021

Overview:

- Walking is the most studied form of exercise.
- Consumer Reports state that multiple studies have proven that walking is the best thing that people can do to improve overall health and increase longevity and functional years.
- Walking targets the leg muscles, as it works the major muscles.
- Walking uphill is great for your glutes.
- Keeping up a brisk pace can be a great cardio workout.
- Walking is low impact, so it will not jar your joints.
- Walking is a free physical activity, since even walking shoes are optional.

Facts: 50% of adults do not get the recommended levels of physical activity.

91% of children and youth do not meet the recommended levels of daily activity.

A 2017 study of more than 100 countries revealed:

- The average number of steps taken each day around the world is 5000.
- Canadian's average steps only average 4819 steps per day.
- Britain's average daily steps are 5444 steps per day.

The recommended amount of physical activity in a week is 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous- intensity of activity per week (brisk walking is considered moderate-intensity).

A study in 2020 revealed that Canadians who work full time were sedentary 68.9% of their day on average.

University of Toronto found that walking or gardening a minimum of 20 minutes per day can ward off depression in people of all ages.

A study of 1000 people that walked at least 20 minutes a day a minimum of 5 days a week had 43% fewer sick days than those that exercised once a week or less. If they did get sick, it was a shorter duration and milder symptoms.

Take the Quiz on Walking:

https://www.medicinenet.com/10_benefits_of_walking/quiz.htm

Take the Quiz on Hiking:

<https://play.howstuffworks.com/quiz/hiking-quiz>

Benefits of Walking:

- Increases bone density (prevents osteoporosis).
- Eases back, joint pain and generalized pain.
- Regular walking improves general health and longevity and increases quality of life.
- Improves cardiac risk factors such as cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, vascular stiffness, and inflammation.
- Less likely to fall and suffer fractures.
- Less likely to sustain injuries because your joints have improved range of motion and your muscles are more flexible.
- Improves your mental health and protects against depression.
- Helps curb your craving for chocolate and a variety of sugary snacks.
- Boosts your immune function.
- Decreases your risk of numerous chronic diseases (diabetes, colon cancer, peripheral artery disease).
- Decreases stress levels.
- Increases energy levels.
- Protects against erectile dysfunction.
- Tones your legs.
- Fewer asthma flares while choosing walking for physical activity, as it is less likely to irritate your airways.
- Increases your metabolism.
- Increases blood flow to the brain (protects against dementia, increases creative thinking, increases mental health).
- Increases eye health.
- Walking is inexpensive and accessible to all age groups.



Guidelines for physical activity:

https://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_adults_en.pdf

https://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_older-adults_en.pdf

So how do I get started?

Start by **determining your baseline** number of steps over the course of a week. Aim for 1000 or 2000 steps per day when beginning. Once you are able to maintain those steps for a week or two, work at increasing the average steps by increments. Do not be discouraged if you need to take a break, it will get easier as each day progresses.

When counting steps:

80 steps a minute is considered a leisure pace.

100 steps per minute is considered moderate intensity or a brisk pace.

120 steps per minute is considered fast.

Good posture is important when using walking as a form of physical exercise. You need to keep your head and spine straight, no leaning forward or back, look straight ahead (but look down for obstacles occasionally). Keep your shoulders and arms loose and swing them accordingly.

Breathing regularly and steady is important. Never hold your breath or try to take a deep breath while walking.

Frequency, duration, and tempo?

- Walking daily is best as the benefits of walking tend to accumulate. The longer the break between sessions, the lower the cumulative effects (longer than 5 days between walks and the cumulative effect is negligible).
- Walking is low impact but can be dynamic. Fat burning kicks in at around the 30-to-40-minute mark after you start.
- Your walking speed is individual according to your conditioning, the terrain, the weather, and your objective. It is recommended to have a brisk pace which is considered 90 to 110 steps per minute (4 to 5 km/hr). Slow down if you find it difficult to breath.

Shoes are optional, but it is recommended to buy appropriate shoes.



- Do not buy hiking shoes unless you are walking on harsh terrain. They may be too heavy and not as flexible for walking on flat terrain.
- Do not buy runners as they have a “forward balance” that is not good for walking. They may distribute stress on your legs and lower spine causing discomfort.
- Buy walking shoes or the next best option are cross-trainers.
- Shoes should be chosen by fit and comfort which are more important than style.
- They should feel supportive but not snug or constricting.
- They should have a padded tongue and heel pad,
- Uppers should be light, breathable, and flexible.
- The insoles should be moisture resistant.
- The sole should be shock-absorbing,
- The heel wedge should be raised so the sole at the back is 2 times thicker than at the front.
- The toe box should be roomy, even when wearing athletic socks.
- For further guidance on how to choose ideal shoes for walking, follow the link below:
<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/walking.html>

Researchers have found that taking 8000 steps per day is associated with 51% lower risk from death from all causes compared with those individuals taking only 4000 steps per day. 12 000 steps per day was associated with 65% lower risk compared to those with 4000 steps per day. The study authors saw no association between step intensity and risk of death.



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Walking Technique:

Your posture, foot motion, stride, and use of arm motion make a big difference in your walking speed and agility to walk energetically.

- Good posture helps you breathe deeper, relax your shoulders and neck, and avoid back and hip pain.
- By using the right arm and foot motion, you will propel yourself forward with a power and less wasted effort.
- Use the same technique whether you are on the sidewalk, a track, or a treadmill.

Tips on How to Increase Walking in Your Daily Life:

- Walk to work.
- Park farther away from your destination than necessary.
- Get off an earlier bus stop and walk the rest of the way.
- Take a walk at lunchtime or on breaks.

- Walk your children to school.
- Walk your dog (or the neighbour's dog).
- Take the stairs when possible.
- Join or start a walking club.
- Wear a pedometer all day, regardless of the activity you are doing. Steps add up quick.

Stair climbing is twice as demanding as a brisk walk on level ground. Stair climbing is 50% harder than walking up a steep incline or lifting weights.

Peak exertions are attained much quicker climbing stairs than walking. Start with a flight or 2 and add more as tolerated. Even slow stair climbing burns calories 2 to 3 times faster than brisk walking on a flat surface.

How to Stay Safe:

- Wear bright coloured clothes and if you are walking on country roads, or around dusk, or at dark, wear reflectors.
- Walk facing cars if there are no sidewalks.
- Beware of dogs.
- Beware of people, especially if you are in unfamiliar locations- Stay safe.
- Walk in well-lit walker friendly areas.
- Drink plenty of water before and after your walk and stay hydrated.
- If it is too cold, wet, or slippery, walk indoors on a treadmill or a mall.
- Wear sturdy shoes with a good heel and arch support.
- Wear sunscreen even on cloudy days.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- Walk with a companion.

Researched Ways to Walk More:

- Walk as much as you can. Aim for 15 000 steps per day but 10 000 steps is a more realistic minimal goal.
- Pick up the pace. A faster pace lowers your BMI and your waist circumference. Aim for a minimum of 100 steps per minute.
- Break it up. Take walking breaks throughout the day. Aim for 10 minutes at a time at a brisk pace.
- Try intervals of 30 seconds to 1-minute bursts of faster walking.
- Walk uphill and try increasing your intensity. When you combine walking fast uphill, you have the equivalent benefits in half the time.

Try speed walking:

<https://www.verywellfit.com/benefits-of-speed-walking-3436249>

Walking vs:

Running- Running is better for weight loss, decreasing blood pressure, cholesterol, and your risk of Type II diabetes. Walking, however, is more comfortable and more sustainable for most people with a very low risk of musculoskeletal complications.

Cycling, Swimming, Fitness class- Lacking comparable studies, but walking is cheaper and more accessible. However, with joint pain, non-bearing weight exercises may be better, such as swimming and water aerobics. A combination of walking with non-weight bearing exercise is the smart approach.

Try getting a Total Body Workout with Nordic Walking:

<https://canada.humankinetics.com/blogs/excerpt/benefits-of-nordic-walking>

If Canadians followed the recommendations for physical activities, we could avoid premature deaths:

33% of deaths related to coronary artery disease,

25% of deaths related to strokes,

20% of deaths related to type II diabetes, and

20% of deaths related to hypertension.

*You don't have to go fast...
you just have to go.*

Atticus

Physical Activity Guidebook:

<https://www.physicalactivityplan.org/resources/CPAG.pdf>

Let's Get Moving Guidebook:

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving/pub-eng.pdf>

Starting a Walking program:

<https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/exercise-starting-walking-program>

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