



# Walk 40 Miles This Month

**CHALLENGE**  
Start training  
and work up to  
walking 40 miles  
this month.

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Keep a written record of the days you walk and how far you go. Record the activity on your monthly Health Challenge Calendar.
  2. Read “Everybody needs regular physical activity” and “Developing your walking program,” and “Keep walking fun, safe, and interesting.”
  3. To complete the Challenge, walk at least 40 miles in 1 month. Use your monthly Health Challenge™ Calendar to keep track.
  4. Keep records of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.
- \* You might need to gradually build up your walking mileage for a few weeks before you attempt this challenge.

## Everybody needs regular physical activity

No matter what your age or fitness level, physical activity will improve your health. The easiest and most popular form of exercise is walking. Walking is easy. Almost anyone can do it. And you don't need lessons to learn. You can walk any time, day or night. You can walk anywhere: sidewalks, trails, roads, fields, parks, treadmills, or shopping malls. Walking is also inexpensive – you don't need to buy expensive sports equipment. All you need is loose-fitting clothing and a pair of comfortable shoes with cushioned soles, a good arch, and heel support. Buy walking shoes with uppers made of materials that breathe, such as nylon mesh.

With a good pair of shoes, you're ready to begin your walking program. Keep these things in mind:

- **Ease into your walk.** Pick up speed gradually as you get used to the exertion. Don't overdo it in mileage or speed. Allow time for your body to adapt.

- **Drink water** before and after your walk. If you walk more than 15 minutes, or if it's hot, bring water along and sip while you walk.
- **Posture matters.** Focus on the horizon, keep your shoulders back, and tuck in your abs (stomach muscles) to avoid arching your lower back.
- **Look ahead,** not down at the ground.
- **Stand up straight** when walking on level ground. Lean forward slightly when walking up hills, or at a very rapid pace.
- **Swing your arms,** with your elbows bent up to but not more than a 90-degree angle. Keep your elbows fixed. Your hands come to the centerline in front of your body, but do not cross it. Pump your arms faster to help you walk faster.
- **Walk as fast as feels comfortable.** You should be able to carry on a conversation while walking. If you're too breathless to talk, you're going too fast.
- **Check your breathing** periodically to see if you're exercising within your target intensity. (See the next page for instructions on monitoring the intensity of your walk.)
- **Take easy strides,** not overly long ones. Your stride will lengthen as you pick up speed, but don't force yourself to take longer steps.
- **Push off with your back foot** for power. Generate push at the end of each step as your leg prepares to swing forward. You should feel as if you're showing the sole of your shoe to someone behind you.
- **Land on the heel of your foot,** and roll forward to drive off the ball of your foot. Walking only on the ball of your foot, or walking flat-footed, may cause fatigue and soreness.
- **Slow down a few minutes** before you finish. This is your “cool down” period.
- **Gently stretch** after walking.
- **Keep track of your progress** with a walking journal or an online tracking program.





## Developing your walking program

If you haven't been exercising or have a physical condition or limitation, see your doctor before starting your exercise program. Then, start slowly. You might be shocked at how out of condition you are. Don't be discouraged if you are only able to walk 5 or 10 minutes. You can build up your stamina.

If you're able to walk 5 minutes, do that; rest; then walk another 5–10 minutes or until you're fatigued. As your condition improves, you should gradually increase your time and pace. Some experts say it takes a month of reconditioning to make up for each year of physical inactivity.

Here's a week-by-week guide to help you develop a walking program.

DEVELOP YOUR WALKING PROGRAM				
WEEK	Warm Up Walk normally	Aerobic Zone Walk briskly	Cool Down Walk normally	TOTAL
1	5 min.	5 min.	5 min.	15 min.
2	5 min.	7 min.	5 min.	17 min.
3	5 min.	9 min.	5 min.	19 min.
4	5 min.	11 min.	5 min.	21 min.
5	5 min.	13 min.	5 min.	23 min.
6	5 min.	15 min.	5 min.	25 min.
7	5 min.	18 min.	5 min.	28 min.
8	5 min.	20 min.	5 min.	30 min.
9	5 min.	23 min.	5 min.	33 min.
10	5 min.	26 min.	5 min.	36 min.
11	5 min.	28 min.	5 min.	38 min.
12	5 min.	30 min.	5 min.	40 min.

### Week 13 and thereafter:

- ✓ Check your breathing periodically to see if you're exercising too hard.
- ✓ As you get more in shape, try exercising at a more brisk pace, or lengthen your time and distance.
- ✓ Gradually increase your walking time to 30-60 minutes, 5 or more days a week.
- ✓ Have fun, and keep it up for a lifetime!

*Source: Sample Walking Program. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. National Institutes of Health. Accessed 2009.*

Forty miles a month might sound overwhelming until you break it down. It's just 1.3 miles every day. Once you get into a regular walking program, you'll probably be walking more than that. Your goal should be to get to the place where you can comfortably walk 3 miles in 45–50 minutes – that's 60 miles a month walking just 5 days a week!

## Monitor the intensity of your walk

It is important to walk fast enough to challenge the heart and lungs to show improvement, but not so fast that you overdo it. You can monitor your intensity by listening to how hard you are breathing. You know you are getting a good challenge to your cardiovascular system when:

- ✓ You are breathing deeply but are not out of breath.
- ✓ You begin to warm up and sweat a little.
- ✓ Your heart rate begins to climb but isn't racing.

When walking and warmed up, your walk should feel "fairly easy" to "somewhat difficult" but not hard or strenuous. If you exercise too intensely, you are likely to tire out before completing your exercise time or distance. If you don't walk briskly, you will not see as much improvement in your walking capability. Start at an easy level and slowly work up to a more vigorous walking pace.

Research shows that people who walk briskly for 30–45 minutes most days of the week cut their risk in half for heart disease and early death. Regular walking can:

- ✓ Strengthen your bones and prevent osteoporosis and hip fractures in later life
- ✓ Reduce your risk for colon, breast, and pancreatic cancers
- ✓ Improve your stamina and your fitness
- ✓ Give you more energy
- ✓ Improve your mood and decrease the risk of depression
- ✓ Reduce stress and help you relax
- ✓ Tone and strengthen your muscles
- ✓ Increase the number of calories your body uses to help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- ✓ Lower your risk of chronic diseases, such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- ✓ Give you an opportunity to socialize actively with friends and family
- ✓ Help you live a longer, more productive life

## Keep walking safe, fun, and interesting

Following a few precautions will help you have a safer walking experience:

- **Choose a pleasant and safe place to walk** – a well-lighted neighborhood, a local school track or parking lot, or a busy park.
- **Walk in a covered shopping mall** when the weather is nasty outside.
- **Invite someone** – a friend, spouse, child, or neighbor – to go walking with you. Your walking partners should be able to walk with you on your same schedule and at the same speed.
- **Take your dog** walking with you (if you have one).
- **Occasionally plan special walks** by a lake, in the mountains, or by a river. In winter, go snowshoeing.
- **Wear clothes that are right for the season.** Try using layers of clothing in the cold weather to keep you warm, and shorts and a cotton tee shirt in warm weather to keep you cool.
- **Wear a reflective vest** or brightly colored clothing if you walk at dawn, dusk, or night.
- **Remove jewelry** when exercising briskly to prevent chaffing.
- **Keep aware of your surroundings.** Wearing headphones can be distracting and dangerous if you walk along streets.

**Exercise Is Powerful Medicine:**  
[www.wellsource.info/wn/Physical\\_Activity.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/Physical_Activity.pdf)

**Additional information:**  
Walking Works,  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association:  
[www.fitness.gov/BCBSAfinalfinalWalkGuide.pdf](http://www.fitness.gov/BCBSAfinalfinalWalkGuide.pdf)

### Resources:

*Walking for Exercise and Pleasure.* The President's Council on Physical fitness and Sports. 2009.

*Walking: A Step in the Right Direction.* National Weight-control Information Network. National Institutes of Health. Accessed 2009.

Fenton M. *The Complete Guide to Walking for Health, Weight Loss, and Fitness.* The Lyons Press. NY. 2001.

President's Sports Award. Available at: <http://www.fitness.gov/activelife/activelife3/sportsaward.pdf>. Accessed 2009.



### Take a Virtual Walk!

- Pick a location you'd like to visit.
- Calculate the distance from your house to that location, such as a national park, scenic vacation spot, or a historical site.
- Write down your mileage daily, and plot your miles walked on a map.
- When you've accumulated enough miles to walk across your state, to the ocean, or other selected spot, take a mini-vacation there.

When you first start, walk every other day, and then slowly increase to 5+ days a week. If your muscles or feet get sore, ease back for a few days. Walk a little slower or reduce your distance. Take a day off when needed. Give your body time to adapt. Remember that the more you walk, the better you will feel!



# Walk 40 Miles This Month

## Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the miles you walk each day. Forty miles in a month is 1.3 miles a day, on average.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of miles you walked. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of good health and wellbeing.
4. Turn in your Health Challenge™ form if requested, or enter your completion of this Challenge on the Health Activity Tracker report for the month, if applicable. Keep this record for evidence of completion.

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MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge	ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary	
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____		
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of miles I walked this month

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking



### Other wellness projects completed this month:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_