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# *Why Walk?*

**A regular walking program can help you to:**

* Burn calories
* Lose weight
* Reduce blood cholesterol
* Lower blood pressure
* Elevate your mood/ lift your spirits
* Increase your self-esteem
* Improve fitness
* Boost bone strength
* Reduce your carbon footprint and help you do your part in saving the environment

**For those of us who want to manage weight, walking is often the best** [**exercise**](http://www.weightloss.com.au/exercise.html) **to get started on because:**

* It is one of the easiest exercises to do.
* It can be done almost anywhere at any time.
* No special equipment or expertise is required to get started.
* Progress is easy to plan and measure over time.
* It isn't too taxing on the body so it can be done every day.
* It can easily be done with others making motivation easier.
* Even a little bit can produce beneficial results.
* It increases metabolism.

Physical activity can be a lifesaver – literally. People who are physically inactive have twice the risk for heart disease and stroke. When you're active 30 to 60 minutes a day, most days of the week, you can dramatically lower your risk of heart disease and stroke. Regular activity also helps prevent and control risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and obesity.

Walking increases your heart rate, strengthens your heart, and increases blood circulation through your body, bringing more oxygen and nutrients to your organs. Exercise also increases your lungs' ability to take in oxygen, lowers blood pressure, helps to reduce body fat, and improves blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

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# *Walking and Eating for a Healthier Heart*

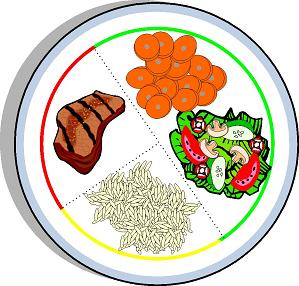
In addition to walking as a promotion for heart health, eating nutritious, balanced meals and healthy snacks may reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke. Having a healthy diet, helps you increase your intake of heart-healthy nutrients, manage your weight, keep your blood pressure down, control your blood sugar levels, and lower your cholesterol.

Start by aiming to include items from the four food groups: vegetables and fruit, whole-grain products, lower-fat milk products and alternatives, and lower-fat meat and alternatives. When you're grocery shopping, look for the Health Check symbol on food packaging. The Heart and Stroke Foundation's food information program, based on Canada's Food Guide, is your assurance that the product contributes to an overall healthy diet.

***Heart-healthy cooking focuses on lowering your intake of saturated and trans fats. It also includes limiting salt while upping fibre and making sure you eat 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit a day.***

**What's on your plate?** Fill about half of the plate with a colourful variety of vegetables, a quarter of the plate with whole grains such as brown rice or 100% whole-wheat bread. Fish, poultry, lean meat or legumes (chickpeas, lentils, tofu) should make up the remaining one-quarter of the plate.

**Try smart-switching:** Substituting healthy ingredients for less healthy ones won't take any more time and may even save you money. Use plain, lower-fat yogurt instead of sour cream, lower-fat cheese instead of the full-fat type, and evaporated skim milk instead of cream. Cook whole-wheat pasta instead of white. Replace some of the white flour in a recipe with 100% whole-wheat flour.

**Shake the salt habit:** Instead of salt, spice things up with fresh or dried herbs. Try dill with fish, paprika with chicken or ginger with beef. Lightly sautéed garlic, onions and sweet red peppers add flavour as well as assorted nutrients that promote good health.

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***Walking can Improve your Sleep***

It's a basic necessity of life, as important to our health and well-being as air, food and water. When we sleep well, we wake up feeling refreshed, alert and ready to face daily challenges. When we don't, every part of our lives can suffer. Our jobs, relationships, productivity, health and safety (and that of those around us) are all put at risk.

**Walking improves your health and the healthier you get the better your sleep will become.**

Sleep experts generally recommend an average of 7-9 hours per night. Some people can get along with less while others need as much as ten hours to feel alert the next day.

Sleep helps us thrive by contributing to a healthy immune system, and can also balance our appetites by helping to regulate levels of the hormones ghrelin and leptin, which play a role in our feelings of hunger and fullness. So when we’re sleep deprived, we may feel the need to eat more, which can lead to weight gain.

**Tips for Improving Sleep:**

* Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate) and nicotine (cigarettes, tobacco products) close to bedtime.
* Avoid alcohol as it can lead to disrupted sleep.
* Exercise regularly, but complete your workout at least 2 hours before bedtime.
* Establish a regular relaxing, not alerting, bedtime routine (e.g. taking a bath or relaxing in a hot tub).
* Create a sleep-conducive environment that is dark, quiet and preferably cool and comfortable.

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***Walking Lifts your Spirits & Increases Self-Esteem***

**Walking can be an effective way to boost your mood and increase self-esteem.**

**Walking is a potent medicine and has a huge positive impact on your emotional health.**

**Walking is useful in controlling feelings of sadness, depression and anxiety for a number of reasons.**

• While exercising your body produces endorphins, or feel-good chemicals, which make you feel instantly better and happier. Effects last for some time after you stop exercising. These chemicals may also help combat depression.

• Exercise removes the build-up of stress hormones in the body which can undermine wellbeing, causing problems such as headaches, fatigue, loss of concentration, problems sleeping and many other mental and physical symptoms.

• Exercise can provide focus. Having new goals provide direction and obtaining those goals, however big or small, breeds a sense of achievement and self confidence.

• Exercise gives a feeling of release from problems. You can abandon responsibilities and concentrate on the purely physical, controlling your breathing, walking or running for that extra half a mile.

• Exercise can provide a change of scene, getting people out of their homes and routines, meeting new people and feeling less isolated. Group walking can provide a sense of belonging, even if it is just smiling at the other runners or walkers in the park. Joining a walking group provides opportunities for social contact beyond the normal sphere of your life and its attendant stresses, and can make a refreshing change.

• Exercise can boost self-esteem. One can gain new skills, improve body image - becoming fitter and healthier.

• The benefits of exercise last longer than quick-fixes such as comfort-eating, smoking, or drinking tea or coffee, all of which may contribute to health problems.

*Even if you do not suffer from depression or low self-esteem, you will benefit emotionally from half an hour of exercise; feeling instantly invigorated, lighter and happier. Everyone needs to get out and exercise every day to help keep your body and your brain healthy.*

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***Walk – Help Yourself & the Environment***

* About 15% of all trips are less than one mile long, and more than 50% of those are made by car. Drive 10 fewer miles each week and you’ll reduce the pollution that causes global warming by more than 500 pounds a year.
* If we all walked just 30 minutes a day instead of driving, we’d save about 8.4 billion gallons of gasoline a year and reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by 82 million tons.
* If 10,000 people hoofed it five miles a week instead of driving for one year, we’d eliminate the CO2 created by 219 cars.

**Other tips to increase walking and reduce your carbon footprint:**

* Try to link your errands together. Driving to a downtown area to bank, grocery shop and go to the hardware store. Park in a central location and turn at least two of those trips into a walk.
* Think about all the places you visit in a typical week or month – the ATM, the post office, your friends’, your children’s friends’ houses, convenience stores. If they fall within a one-mile radius of your home, park that car and walk instead.
* Walk at least part of the way to work - for example, walk to the train station, or park the car further away from the office.
* Walk to a co-worker’s house and car pool to the office.



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***Walking off Weight***

***To figure out how many calories you burn while walking use this formula which is based on walking 3-4 mph***

***.53 x your weight in pounds = Total Calorie Burn per Mile***

Remember that in order to lose weight (body fat) the calories you consume must be less than the calories you burn. You need to create a deficit. 1lb of fat is equal to 3500 calories. So if you want to lose a pound a week you need to reduce your calorie intake and/or exercise to expend 500 calories every day of the week.

***Count Your Steps!***

How many steps do you take in a day? Most people don’t know. A pedometer is a great exercise tool. It is an effective motivator that allows you to track and log the number of steps you take each day.

Recommended daily step goals depend on your age and current level of fitness.

**Daily Step Goals\*\***

**Highly active (children, youth and fit adults) 10,000 – 16,000**

**Active (adults) 10,000**

**Somewhat Active (older adults) 7,000 – 10,000**

**Low Active (adults with chronic condition) 4,000 - 7,000**

**\* \*Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program – especially if you have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes or heart disease.**