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Walk *This Way*

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Reasons to Get Moving

Do you remember when the rules for physical activity were “no pain, no gain”? Ideas about physical activity have changed dramatically, but the health benefits remain.

Regular physical activity helps protect against cardiovascular disease and its risk factors: hypertension, obesity and diabetes mellitus. It also can reduce risk of osteoporosis, reduce stress and improve sleep and overall mood.

Recent research shows that most people who begin a physical activity program do so to control their weight or improve their fitness level, health or appearance. After about a year, they continue exercising for the mood improvement (1).

It's Not a Footrace

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends accumulating a total of 30 minutes of moderate activity on five or more days a week. The good news for many people is that moderate physical activity doesn't necessarily mean sweating in an aerobics class.

A brisk walk, gardening, raking leaves, shoveling snow or washing windows can help you toward the 30-minute goal, even when done in 10-minute segments. The Surgeon General's Report suggests doing physical activity that burns at least 150 calories/day or 1000 calories/week (2).

According to a recent national study, two-thirds of American adults fall short of this goal. More men, highly educated and younger adults met the recommendations than women, ethnic minorities, less educated and older adults (3).

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go

You don't need to drive to a gym or empty your wallet to buy special equipment. Try walking. It's an easy, safe activity that can make you feel and look better. Besides, your only expense is a pair of shoes. Why not begin a regular walking program today?

■ Choose your shoes wisely.

A comfortable pair of shoes with good arch support is the only special equipment you need. When buying walking shoes, shop late in the day when your feet

may be swollen. Measure both feet. For proper fit, be sure there's a thumbnail's width between the tip of your longest toe and the edge of the toe box.

Wear appropriate socks, and walk around the store in both shoes. Try on several pairs of shoes and compare fit and comfort. If they still feel comfortable after at least 10 minutes and they fit your budget, you may want to walk over to the cashier.

■ Dress for safety and for the season.

For visibility, wear light-colored clothes and always walk facing oncoming traffic. In cooler weather, opt for several layers of clothes so you can shed layers if you get too warm. If icy, wear shoes with a good grip. Wear a cap to help maintain body temperature.

■ Warm up and cool down.

Warm up your muscles before working out. Limber up your muscles with some “static stretching” — a continuous stretch just to the point where you feel a slight pull. Ballistic stretching, which is a repetitive bouncing type of stretching, is not recommended.

To warm up, start slowly during the first five or 10 minutes of your activity, then increase your pace. During the last five or 10 minutes, slow your pace to cool down. Stretching again will help prevent sore muscles.

■ Bring a water bottle and drink frequently.

When you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated. Many experts recommend drinking a half-cup of water every 15 minutes while being physically active.

■ Pace yourself. Find a comfortable speed.

Take the talk test: if you can't talk while exercising, slow down. If you feel pain, dizziness, nausea or other symptoms — STOP. If the problem persists, check with your physician.

■ Stay motivated. Walk with a buddy or listen to tapes or a recorded book.

■ If you're just beginning to exercise, try the pattern listed in the Sample Beginning Walking Program developed by the National Institute of Health (4).

This pattern was developed for the novice walker.

You may progress more quickly, so follow your own capabilities.

A Sample *Beginning Walking Program*

	Warm up	Target zone exercising	Cool down	Total time
Week 1				
Session A	Walk slowly 5 min.	Then walk briskly 5 min.	Then walk slowly 5 min.	15 min.
Session B	Repeat above pattern			
Session C	Repeat above pattern			

Continue with at least three exercise sessions during each week of the program.

Week 2	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 7 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	17 min.
Week 3	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 9 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	19 min.
Week 4	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 11 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	21 min.
Week 5	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 13 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	23 min.
Week 6	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 15 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	25 min.
Week 7	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 18 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	28 min.
Week 8	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 20 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	30 min.
Week 9	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 23 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	33 min.
Week 10	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 26 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	36 min.
Walk 11	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 28 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	38 min.
Week 12	Walk slowly 5 min.	Walk briskly 30 min.	Walk slowly 5 min.	40 min.

Before beginning any exercise program, it is recommended that you consult with your physician.

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