

HOW TO START **WALKING** FOR BETTER HEALTH



Walking is safe, easy, free and fun for people at all fitness levels. But be sure to check with your primary care physician before starting any new exercise program.

Also, be sure to check for the most current local guidelines regarding social distancing in public areas like parks and trails. The COVID-19 situation continues to change rapidly, but generally speaking, it's fine to walk outside as long as you avoid congregating with others and maintain a safe distance. The most reliable, up-to-date information can be found at the official [State of Illinois COVID-19 Response](#) website.

Beginner

Start with 10 minutes of brisk walking per day for the first three weeks. Your pace should cover a mile in 17-20 minutes. Gradually increase by five more minutes per week until you reach 30 minutes per day, six days per week.

Intermediate

Walk three miles at a pace of 13-17 minutes per mile. Do this three to five times per week. If that pace is too fast for you, increase distance instead.

Advanced

If you're already in great shape, increase intensity by adding a challenge:

- Walk with a 10-15 pound backpack.
- Add hills or stairs to your route.
- Walk on a beach.
- Carry small hand weights and swing your arms.
- Try racewalking: walking at a pace of five to nine miles per hour.

Fitness Walking Technique

Proper walking technique avoids injuries and makes your workout more effective.

Posture

Head upright, chin neutral, with shoulders back and relaxed.

Arm Swing

Burn extra calories by letting your arms bend at the elbows and swinging them in an arc from waist to chest.

Foot Placement

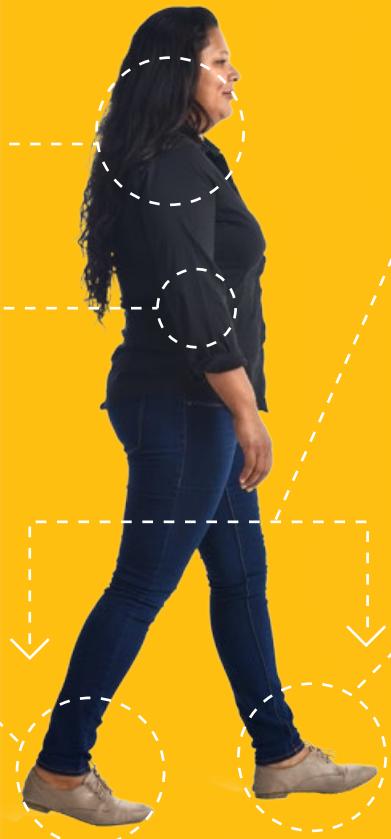
Keep feet close to an imaginary line running down the center of the pavement.

Stride Length

Stand upright with feet slightly apart. Lean forward at the ankles (like a ski jumper). Transfer your weight forward and as you do, put your right foot out in front of you and catch yourself before you fall forward. This is your optimal stride length.

Stride

Always have one foot on the ground. Heel first, then roll onto the ball of the foot. Finish with a strong push off the toes.



FITNESS WALKING TO LOSE WEIGHT

After about two weeks of regular fitness walking, you should experience decreased blood pressure, stronger leg muscles and improved energy levels. A fitness walking program can also help you lose weight, but that takes time and patience. Gradually work your way up to 45-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous walking, five to seven days a week. Include strength training to increase muscle mass and condition your entire body.

For significant weight loss, it's recommended that you cut calories while increasing activity. This chart approximates the number of calories burned by walking:

Walking Pace (mph)	Body Weight (lbs.)					
	100	125	150	175	200	225
3.0	52	66	79	92	105	117
3.5	54	67	80	94	107	121
4.0	58	72	87	101	116	131
4.5	65	81	97	113	129	146

WALK THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY

The Surgeon General recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. However, that activity can be accumulated: for example, three 10-minute walks during a single day.

Try to accumulate 30-60 minutes of daily activity by combining any of these:

- Walk to work or take public transportation part of the way and walk the rest. Be sure to follow the most current social distancing guidelines
- Take a 10-15 minute brisk walk during a work break
- Take a 10-15 minute brisk walk before or after a meal
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- At home, enjoy gardening or yard work
- Walk the dog
- Take an online dance class

WALK SAFE

- Stay on sidewalks whenever possible but also be mindful of maintaining the recommended distance of six feet between yourself and fellow walkers for effective social distancing. On streets, walk facing oncoming traffic
- Avoid walking after dark. If you do, choose well-lit streets and wear reflective clothing. Carry a flashlight
- Walk with a mission. Look like you know where you're going and walk briskly
- Carry a cellphone and a whistle
- If threatened or attacked, yell "Fire" instead of "Help"
- Let someone know where you're going and when you're expected back



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