

# “I’d like to begin a walking program. How do I get started?”

All you need are comfortable clothes and shoes.



The popularity of walking as a fitness activity is growing by leaps and bounds. Low-risk and easy to start, walking has proven its health benefits in numerous studies.

## A regular walking program can help:

- Reduce blood cholesterol
- Burn calories and keep weight down
- Lower blood pressure
- Increase metabolism
- Reduce stress
- Increase cardiovascular endurance
- Boost bone strength
- Enhance your sense of well-being
- Improve sleep

## Get ready

A walking program is simple to start. Layer loose clothing, keeping in mind that exercise elevates the body’s temperature. Shoes specifically designed for walking are best.

Every workout should begin with a brief warm-up and a few simple stretches. Walk around the house or in place for a few minutes to get the blood flowing to the muscles before you attempt to stretch them. Although walking primarily works the major muscles of the legs, don’t forget to stretch your back, shoulders and arms. This will help to loosen up any tension you may be carrying and make your walk more enjoyable as well as more effective.

## Get moving

Beginning walkers can make their workouts less strenuous by limiting how fast and far they walk. Keep in mind the following:

- **Walk short distances**  
Begin with a five-minute stroll and gradually increase your distance.
- **Forget about speed**  
Walk at a comfortable pace. Focus on good posture, keeping your head lifted and shoulders relaxed.
- **Swing your arms naturally**  
Breathe deeply. If you can't catch your breath, slow down or avoid hills.
- **Be sure you can talk while walking**  
If you can't converse, you are walking too fast.

## Get fit!

Walking is one fitness activity that allows you numerous options. Once you have reached a point where you can walk a few miles with relative ease, you can start to vary the time and intensity.

Walking hills, in addition to increasing your cardiovascular endurance, is a great way to tone the legs. Concentrate on lengthening your stride or increasing your speed. And don't forget to reward yourself after each workout with a few minutes of relaxing stretches to help prevent sore muscles.

Listening to lively music while you walk is also a great way to energize your workout. But if you wear headphones, keep the volume down and watch out for traffic that you may not hear.

Keep track of your progress. Many experts recommend that you walk a minimum of 30 minutes a day. But there are no hard and fast rules. Fit walking into your schedule whenever you can. That may mean three 10-minute walks each day, or even hour-long walks two to three times a week. The best schedule is one that keeps you walking and keeps you fit!