Medifit Education's

WALKING
MEDICAL BENEFITS

Motion as Medicine:
The Natural, Slow-Paced Prescription

















- Walking and Fat Loss
- Walking and Obesity Prevention
- Walking and Diabetes Control
- Walking and Heart Health
- Walking and Blood Pressure Regulation
- Walking and Cholesterol Management
- Walking and Cancer Prevention
- Walking and Bone Strength
- Walking and Joint Health
- Walking and Lung Capacity
- Walking and Immune System Boost
- Walking and Brain Function
- Walking and Stress Hormones
- Walking and Sleep Quality
- Walking and Hormonal Balance
- Walking and Longevity

Dr Mahesh Kumar
Sonal Chavan

www.theMedifit.com
ISBN - 978-81-988894-8-2

MEDIFIT
PUBLISHING HOUSE
www.theMedifit.com

Medifit Educations

Walking - Medical Benefits

Motion as Medicine: The Natural, Slow-Paced Prescription

ISBN – 978-81-989894-8-2

e – Book

Dr Mahesh Kumar

Sonal Chavan

Medifit Publishing House

A venture of Medifit Biologicals Private Limited
Medifit Education, Prabhadevi,
Mumbai, India

www.theMedifit.com

Copyright Notice

All content within this book,

Medifit Educations, Walking - Medical Benefits

is © Dr. Mahesh Kumar & Medifit Publishing House, a venture of Medifit Biologicals Private Limited.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or copied in any form without the express written permission of the copyright holders.

ISBN

978-81-989894-8-2

e – Book

Disclaimer

The information provided in this book,

Medifit Educations, Walking - Medical Benefits

is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Walking - Medical Benefits

1. Walking and Fat Loss 01 - 06

2. Walking and Obesity Prevention 07 - 12

3. Walking and Diabetes Control 13 - 15

4. Walking and Heart Health 16 - 18

5. Walking and Blood Pressure Regulation 19 – 22

6. Walking and Cholesterol Management 23 - 30

7. Walking and Cancer Prevention 31 – 34

8. Walking and Bone Strength 35 - 38

9. Walking and Joint Health 39 - 42

10. Walking and Lung Capacity 43 - 49

11. Walking and Immune System Boost 50 - 52

12. Walking and Brain Function 53 - 56

13. Walking and Stress Hormones 57 - 59

14. Walking and Sleep Quality 60 - 66

15. Walking and Hormonal Balance 67 – 71

16. Walking and Longevity 72 - 75

Walking - Medical Benefits

1. WALKING AND FAT LOSS

Walking is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages and abilities. Start your walking program gradually, increasing length and pace as you get used to it. The following suggestions may help you to incorporate regular walking into your lifestyle.Walking is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health by **Walking everyday, Just 30 minutes .**

As it can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. It can also reduce your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Unlike some other forms of exercise, walking is free and doesn't require any special equipment or training.

Physical activity does not have to be vigorous or done for long periods in order to improve your health. Walking is low impact, requires minimal equipment, can be done at any time of day and can be performed at your own pace. You can get out and walk without worrying about the risks associated with some more vigorous forms of exercise.

Walking is also a great form of physical activity for people who are overweight, elderly, or who haven't exercised in a long time. Walking for fun and fitness isn't limited to strolling by yourself around local neighbourhood streets. There are various clubs, venues and strategies you can use to make walking an enjoyable and social part of your lifestyle.

Health benefits of walking

You carry your own body weight when you walk. This is known as weight-bearing exercise. Some of the benefits include: increased cardiovascular and pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness

- reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- improved management of conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes
- stronger bones and improved balance
- increased muscle strength and endurance
- reduced body fat.
- Walk for 30 minutes a day

To get the health benefits, try to walk for at least 30 minutes as briskly as you can on most days of the week. 'Brisk' means you can still talk but not sing, and you may be puffing slightly. Moderate activities such as walking pose little health risk but if you have a medical condition, check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program of physical activity.

Build physical activity into your life.

If it's too difficult to walk for 30 minutes at one time, do regular small bouts (10 minutes) 3 times per day and gradually build up to longer sessions. If your goal is to lose weight, you will need to do physical activity for longer than 30 minutes each day. You can achieve this by starting with smaller bouts of activity throughout the day and increasing these as your fitness improves. Physical activity built into a daily lifestyle plan is also one of the most effective ways to assist with weight loss and keep weight off once it's lost.

Some suggestions to build walking into your daily routine include:

- Take the stairs instead of the lift (for at least part of the way).
- Get off public transport one stop earlier and walk to work or home.
- Walk (don't drive) to the local shops.
- Walk the dog (or your neighbour's dog).

Make walking part of your routine

Try to make walking a routine – for example, try to walk at the same time each day. Remember, you use the same amount of energy no matter what time of day you walk, so do what is most convenient for you. You may find that asking someone to walk with you will help make it a regular activity. Some people find that keeping an activity diary or log also makes it easier.

Wear a pedometer while walking

A pedometer measures the number of steps you take. You can measure your movement throughout a day and compare it to other days or recommended amounts. This may motivate you to move more. The recommended number of steps accumulated per day to achieve health benefits is 10,000 steps or more.

A comfortable intensity for walking

For most people, there is little difference in the amount of energy used by walking a kilometre or running a kilometre – it's just that walking takes longer. Plan to cover a set distance each day and monitor how long it takes you to walk this distance. As your fitness improves, you will be able to walk a longer distance and use more energy. Walking fast burns more kilojoules per hour than walking slowly, but this doesn't mean you have to push yourself until you're breathless. Instead, pace yourself so that you can still talk. This simple rule of thumb means that you walk safely within your target heart rate, which brings about health gains. Our bodies tend to get used to physical activity, so continue to increase your intensity as you improve your fitness levels.

You can increase the intensity of your walks by

- walking up hills
- walking with hand weights
- increasing your walking speed gradually by including some quick walking
- increasing the distance, you walk quickly before returning to a moderate walking pace
- walking for longer.

Warm up and cool down after walking

The best way to warm up is to walk slowly. Start each walk at a leisurely pace to give your muscles time to warm up, and then pick up the speed. Afterwards, gently stretch your leg muscles – particularly your calves and front and back thighs. Stretches should be held for about 20 seconds. If you feel any pain, ease off the stretch. Don't bounce or jolt, or you could overstretch muscle tissue and cause microscopic tears, which lead to muscle stiffness and tenderness. It's best to dress lightly when you do physical activity. too many layers can increase sweating and build up body temperature, making you uncomfortable during a walk or possibly cause skin irritations. A gradual cool-down will also prevent muscular stiffness and injury.

Footwear for walking

Walking is a low-cost and effective form of exercise. However, the wrong type of shoe or walking action can cause foot or shin pain, blisters and injuries to soft tissue. Make sure your shoes are comfortable, with appropriate heel and arch supports. Take light, easy steps and make sure your heel touches down before your toes. Whenever possible, walk on grass rather than concrete to help absorb the impact. Make walking a pleasure

Some suggestions to help make regular walking a pleasurable form of physical activity include:

- varying where you walk
- walking the dog
- walking with friends
- joining a walking club.
- Make walking interesting

Ways to keep your daily walk interesting include: If you want to stick close to home and limit your walking to neighbourhood streets, pick different routes so you don't get tired of seeing the same sights. If you feel unsafe walking alone, find one or more friends or family members to walk with. Walk at various times of the day. The sights to see first thing in the morning are bound to differ from those of the afternoon or early evening. Drive to other reserves, park the car and enjoy the views while walking. Explore what's happening around you; notice the sky, the people, the sounds.

Dog walking

A dog that needs regular exercise motivates you to walk every day. You might like the companionship too. If you don't have a dog, and aren't planning on getting one, consider offering to walk a neighbour's dog occasionally. Suggestions for the safety of your dog and other people on foot include: Be considerate of other pedestrians and always keep your dog on its leash.

If you plan to walk in a park, check first to see if dogs are permitted. Many national and state parks and other conservation reserves do not permit dogs.

Other parks generally permit dog-walking on a leash. Many parks allow dogs off the leash – check with your local council.

Always take equipment such as plastic bags and gloves to clean up after your dog.

Walk with others

Walking with other people can turn a bout of exercise into an enjoyable social occasion. Suggestions include: Schedule a regular family walk – this is a great way to pass on healthy habits to your children or grandchildren, and to spend time together, while getting fit at the same time. If you are walking with children, ensure the route and length of time spent walking are appropriate for make sure the route and length of time spent walking are appropriate to their age. Babies and toddlers enjoy long walks in the pram. Take the opportunity to point out highlight items of interest to young ones, such as vehicles, flowers and other pedestrians. Look for the self-guided nature walks that have been set up in many parks. Younger children enjoy looking for the next numbered post; older ones can learn about the plants and animals of the park, and perhaps take photos or record their experience in other ways.

General walking tips

If you have not walked distances for some time, you should start slowly. Increase the length and pace of your walk gradually. Here are some tips on how to get started and how to prepare for walking.

Warm-up activity – start slowly, do a few warm-up exercises and stretches first. Don't walk immediately after a big meal.

Build activity slowly – start with a 20 minute walk then increase gradually. Try to walk at least three times per week.

Use the correct technique – walk at a steady pace, swing your arms freely and stand as straight as you can. Your feet should step in a rolling action from the heel to the toe.

Shoes and socks – wear thick comfortable cotton socks. Sensible, comfortable and lightweight shoes with support are best.

Weather – wear suitable warm, light clothing in the winter and cool, comfortable clothes in the summer. Don't forget your sunscreen and hat.

Water – drink water before and after your walk. Take water with you on your walk, especially in warm weather.

Cool down – make sure you cool down after a long fast walk. Do a few stretching exercises.

Walking tips for children

Statistics show that children are living increasingly sedentary lives. Suggestions on encouraging your child to enjoy regular walks include:

If your child finds television and computer games more interesting than exercise, consider getting them a dog. Your child's desire to love and care for the animal may encourage them to take it on regular walks. Remember, though, that dogs aren't permitted in most national parks and other conservation reserves.

Boost your child's interest in outdoor activities by visiting some of Victoria's scenic areas and organising fun activities, such as sailing on Lake or camping for the weekend at any National Park.

Encourage your child's interest in nature through books and websites, then follow-up with 'field trips' so they can discover their favourite animals or plants for themselves (and enjoy the health benefits of walking at the same time).

Schedule a regular family walk – this is a great way to pass on healthy habits to your children and spend time together, while getting fit at the same time.

When walking with children, make sure the route and length of time spent walking is appropriate to their age. Approximately 1km per birthday is a good rule of thumb. For example, a four-year-old can be expected to walk up to 4km, with plenty of rest breaks.

Start good habits early. Take young babies and toddlers for walks in their pram. As they get older, encourage them to walk part of the way.

Look for self-guided nature walks, which have been set up in many parks. Younger children enjoy looking for the next numbered post; older ones can learn about the plants and animals of the park, and perhaps take photos or record their experience in other ways.

Walking tips for seniors

Regular weight-bearing exercise can improve cardiovascular fitness and bone strength, reduce excess body fat and boost muscle power. Walking is an excellent form of exercise for the elderly, since it is low impact, free and high in health benefits. Suggestions include:

See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program, particularly if you are overweight, haven't exercised in a long time or suffer from a chronic medical condition.

Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of a experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you. Print a copy of the pre-exercise screening tool and discuss it with your doctor or exercise professional.

Consider joining a walking club specific to your needs and age group.

Consider starting up a walking club of your own with friends and neighbours.

Walking tips for people with disabilities

People with disabilities will also benefit from regular exercise. Suggestions include:

See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program.

An able-bodied person can help someone with a disability to better enjoy their neighbourhood walk or bush walk. For example, a sighted companion can warn a vision-impaired person of upcoming obstacles.

2. WALKING AND OBESITY PREVENTION

Obesity is a growing public health crisis in India, affecting both adults and children. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), about 24% of adult women and 23% of adult men are overweight or obese, while obesity rates in children under five have risen significantly since 2015. Factors like increased urbanization, changing dietary habits, and a sedentary lifestyle are contributing to this rise.

Obesity is a chronic disease affecting an increasing number of children, teens and adults. Earlier onset of type 2 diabetes, heart and blood vessel disease, and obesity-related depression and social isolation in children and teens are being seen more often by health care professionals. The longer a person is obese, the more significant obesity-related risk factors become. Given the chronic diseases and conditions associated with obesity and the fact that obesity is hard to treat, prevention is extremely important .A primary reason that prevention of obesity is so vital in children is because the likelihood of childhood obesity persisting into adulthood increases as the child ages. This puts the person at high risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Childhood Obesity

Children and teens can become overweight or obese because of poor eating habits and lack of physical activity. Genetics and lifestyle also contribute to a child’s weight status. Recommendations for prevention of overweight and obesity in children and teens include the following:

Gradually work to change family eating habits and activity levels rather than focusing on a child’s weight.

Be a role model. Parents who eat healthy foods and participate in physical activity set an example, so a child is more likely to do the same.

Encourage physical activity. Children should have 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. More than 60 minutes of activity may promote weight loss and provide weight maintenance.

Reduce screen time in front of phones, computers and TV to less than one to two hours daily.

Encourage children and teens to eat only when hungry and to eat slowly.

Don’t use food as a reward or withhold food as a punishment.

Keep the refrigerator stocked with fat-free or low-fat milk, fresh fruit and vegetables instead of soft drinks and snacks high in sugar and fat.

Serve at least five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

Encourage children and teens to drink water rather than beverages with added sugar, such as soft drinks, sports drinks and fruit juice drinks

Eat meals together as a family. Family meals can create healthier eating habits.

Preventing Obesity in Adults

Many of the strategies that produce successful weight loss and maintenance help prevent obesity. Improving eating habits and increasing physical activity play a vital role in preventing obesity. Recommendations for adults include:

Keep a food diary of what you eat, where you were and how you were feeling before and after you ate.

Eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. A vegetable serving is 1 cup of raw vegetables or 1/2 cup of cooked vegetables or vegetable juice. A fruit serving is one piece of small to medium fresh fruit, 1/2 cup of canned or fresh fruit or fruit juice, or 1/4 cup of dried fruit.

Choose whole grain foods, such as brown rice and whole wheat bread. Don't eat highly processed foods made with refined white sugar, flour, high fructose corn syrup and saturated fat.

Weigh and measure food to learn correct portion sizes. For example, a 3-ounce serving of meat is the size of a deck of cards. Don't order supersized menu items. Learn to read food nutrition labels and use them; keep the number of portions you are really eating in mind. Balance the food "checkbook." If you eat more calories than you burn, you will gain weight. Weigh yourself weekly.

Don't eat foods that are high in "energy density," or that have a lot of calories in a small amount of food. For example, an average cheeseburger with an order of fries can have as many as 1,000 calories and 30 or more grams of fat. By ordering a grilled chicken sandwich or a plain hamburger and a small salad with low-fat dressing, you can avoid hundreds of calories and eliminate much of the fat intake. For dessert, have a serving of fruit, yogurt, a small piece of angel food cake, or a piece of dark chocolate instead of frosted cake, ice cream or pie .

Simply reducing portion sizes and using a smaller plate can help you lose weight. Aim for an average of 60 to 90 minutes or more of moderate to intense physical activity three to four days each week. Examples of moderate intensity exercise are walking a 15-minute mile or weeding and hoeing a garden. Running or playing singles tennis are examples of more intense activities. Look for ways to get even 10 or 15 minutes of some type of activity during the day. Walking around the block or up and down a few flights of stairs is a good start.

Walking regularly may help you burn extra calories, develop lean muscle, and reduce belly fat. Other health benefits are associated with consistent physical activity, too.

If you want to stay fit and healthy, it's important to exercise regularly.

This is because being physically fit can reduce your risk of developing health conditions like heart disease. or diabetes .In addition to helping you live a longer and healthier life, exercise can help you manage your weight..

Walking. is a great form of physical activity that's free, low risk, and accessible to most people. It's not just good for you — it's one of the easiest forms of exercise to incorporate into your day-to-day life. It explores five ways walking more often can help you lose weight and belly fat, among other benefits.

Walking burns calories. Your body needs energy (in the form of calories) for all the complex chemical reactions that allow you to move, breathe, think, and function.

You need to burn more calories than you consume to lose weight. However, daily calorie needs vary from person to person and are affected by things like your :

keep it off. In fact, walking just one mile can burn about 100 calories.

- age
- height
- weight
- sex
- genes
- activity level

Furthermore, being physically active burns more calories, or uses more energy, than being sedentary.

A sedentary lifestyle can not only contribute to weight gain, but can also increase your risk for health problems, namely:

- cardiovascular disease
- heart failure
- mortality

Trying to get more exercise by walking more often can help you burn more calories and reduce these risk.

A 2021 study measured the number of calories regular walkers or runners burned after walking 1 mile (1.6 km). Results showed that walkers and runners burned, on average, 107 calories. This number will vary, however, depending on your weight, sex, and ethnicity.

Furthermore, the study found that running burned more calories than walking, although the difference was small. This means that both forms of exercise,

walking and running, contribute significantly to the number of calories burned and, therefore, weight management.

To increase the intensity of your walk and burn even more calories, try walking on routes with hills or slight inclines.

Walking burns calories, which may help you lose weight and

Walking helps preserve lean muscle

You often lose some muscle in addition to body fat when you cut calories and lose weight.

This can be counterproductive, as muscle is more metabolically active than fat. This means that having more muscle helps you burn more calories each day.

Exercise, including walking, can help counter this effect by preserving lean muscle when you lose weight. Preserving lean muscle helps reduce the drop in metabolic rate that often occurs with weight loss, making your results easier to maintain.

What's more, regular exercise can reduce age-related muscle loss, helping you retain more of your muscle strength and function in later years.

Walking can help prevent some of the muscle loss that may occur from aging or when cutting calories to lose weight. This helps minimize the drop in metabolic rate that occurs when you lose weight, making the pounds easier to keep off.

Walking reduces belly fat

Storing a lot of fat around your midsection (abdominal fat) has been linked to an increased risk of diseases. like diabetes and heart disease.

In fact, men with a waist circumference greater than 40 inches (102 cm) and women with a waist circumference greater than 35 inches (88 cm) are considered to have abdominal obesity which is considered a health risk.

One of the most effective ways to reduce belly fat is to regularly take part in aerobic exercise, such as walking.

In a 2021 systematic review, researchers found that at least moderate aerobic activity was beneficial for reducing visceral adipose tissue. Additionally, exercising 3 times per week for 12–16 weeks and performing 30–60 minutes of aerobic activity reduced visceral adipose tissue.

Another systematic review. found that people on a calorie-controlled diet who participated in exercise showed a dose-dependent reduction in visceral fat compared with the controls.

Regularly partaking in moderate-intensity aerobic exercise like walking is associated with lower levels of belly fat.

Walking improves mood

Exercise is known to boost your mood. Physical activity has been associated with:

- improved mood
- decreased feelings of stress,
- depression, and anxiety.
- increased energy levels

It does this by making your brain more sensitive to the hormones serotonin and norepinephrine. These hormones relieve feelings of depression and stimulate the release of endorphins, which make you feel happy.

This is a great benefit in itself. However, experiencing an improvement in mood when you walk regularly might also make the habit easier to keep up with than if you walk less frequently.

What's more, some studies. have found that finding enjoyment in a physical activity can increase the likelihood that you will continue to participate in it.

People tend to exercise less if they do not find the exercises they're doing enjoyable.

Walking is an excellent choice because it's a moderate-intensity exercise. This is likely to motivate you to walk more rather than give up.

Regularly taking part in exercise that you enjoy, such as walking, can improve your mood and make you more motivated to keep it up, which in turn supports weight loss.

Walking can help keep weight off

Many people who try weight loss programs end up gaining all or some of their weight back. Regular exercise plays an important role in helping you maintain weight loss.

However, you must continuously engage. in physical activity if your goal is to keep off weight that you've already lost.

In fact, studies. have found that people who exercise the most are usually more successful at losing a greater amount of weight, whereas people who exercise the least are more likely to regain weight.

According to the National Weight Control Registry, 94% of people who have successfully maintained a loss of at least 30 pounds for 1 year or more report increasing physical activity, mainly by walking.

Incorporating more walking into your day can help you increase the amount of exercise you do and contribute to your daily activity goals.

Staying active and moving more by walking throughout your day can help maintain weight loss and keep the weight off in the long run.

Walking - Medical Benefits

How to incorporate walking into your lifestyle According to the Centre’s for Disease Control, it’s recommended to get at least 150 minutes. of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week to maintain a stable weight.

In walking terms, that means walking for around 2.5 hours per week (at least 10 minutes at a time) at a brisk pace. Or, walking just 22 minutes per day also satisfies this recommendation.

Doing more exercise than this has additional benefits for your health (and your weight) and reduces your risk for disease even further. There are many ways to increase the amount of walking you do and achieve this target: Use a fitness tracker to motivate yourself. to move more, see your progress, and set step goals Make a habit of taking a brisk walk on your lunch break and/or after dinner.

Ask a friend to join you for an evening walk. Go for a walk with family and kids. Walk your dog every day or join a friend on their dog walks. Take a walking meeting with a colleague or take work calls while walking, instead of at your desk.

Do errands, like going to the grocery store, and any shopping on foot and in person instead of curb side pick-up or online shopping. Walk to work. If it’s too far, park your car further away or get off your bus a few stops early and walk the rest of the way. Try picking new and challenging routes to keep your walks interesting. Join a walking group

3. WALKING AND DIABETES CONTROL.

If you're looking for a way to include more physical activity and exercise into your daily routine, walking is a great place to start. It's free, you can walk almost anywhere at any time or on the spot. And it's good for your diabetes.

Walking is a great way to be less sedentary and break up long periods of sitting time, which we know can be harmful to our health. Breaking up periods of sitting with short, frequent walks can help people with type 2 diabetes reduce their blood sugar levels and their risk of complications, research has shown. And a study we've funded has now found the same benefits for people with type 1 diabetes. And walking is low impact – which means it's easy on your joints – and it's suitable for all fitness levels and ages.

If you'd like to do more walking but are worried about how it will affect your blood sugar levels, or don't know how to start, we've got lots of practical tips to give you confidence. We've also got tips on looking after your feet, which is important if you have diabetes.

Benefits of walking when you have diabetes

When you have diabetes, moving more can make a huge difference to how you feel and how you manage your condition. So, whether you have type 1, type 2 or another type of diabetes, walking is a good way to get physically active and build movement into your daily routine. This is because walking:

- helps the body use insulin better.
- helps relieve stress which can affect your blood sugar levels, and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- helps you build stamina, burn excess calories and make your heart healthier – increasing the speed at which you walk increases the benefits.
- is a low-risk activity because it's easy on your joints.
- it can help improve your sleep.
- "I'd never have imagined that a brisk walk every day could have such amazing benefits in so many different ways."

Tips for doing more walking

If you're unsure if walking is suitable for you, speak to your healthcare team first. They should also be able to offer you advice if you are concerned about falling or worried about any other mobility issues.

If you feel like you need to start off at an easier pace, try standing during a TV advert. If you can manage it, work towards standing for the whole advert break, then move to walking on the spot. You can do it while you're cooking or watching a film or your favourite TV programme. Set realistic goals

A walk can be as short or as long as you decide, for example, a few minutes on the spot, or a walk round the block or into town. You can also walk slow or fast, or along different terrain, but it needs to be suitable for you. You can always make things harder once it becomes too easy and less motivating.

- Be creative with your walks and add variety
- Park your car further away or get off public transport a stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- Try walk and talk phone conversations or meetings.
- Go for a walk with a friend or relative in your local park.
- Set aside a regular time

Have a set time during the day or week to go on your walk - whether that's in the morning, during your lunch break or in the evening. This can help you to keep on track as you don't have to think about fitting it into each day, it can become part of your normal routine.

Plan your walks

Have a rough plan of where you might want to walk. If you're heading for a longer walk, you may want to include nature spots and access to toilets and a café. And take a bag to store a drink, snacks, clothes, mobile phone and your diabetes kit. To help protect your feet, wear well-fitting footwear that's appropriate for the weather. To get ideas for local walks whatever part of the UK you're in, find your local authority's website on gov.uk and put in 'walking' or 'walks'. These often include routes and information for people with limited mobility.

Stay connected

If you're worried about staying motivated, finding a music playlist, radio show or podcast series to listen to when you're walking can help to keep you engaged and make the time go faster. Your walks may also be a good time to check in with your family over the phone, or catch up with your friends and loved ones.

Keep on track with our activity planner

Use the space in the activity planner in our free publication Your Guide to moving more when you have diabetes, to answer the questions about your walking and your reasons for doing so. It helps you track your progress over 10 weeks and reflect on any changes in how you're feeling or anything that's getting in the way of you doing it.

Count your steps and set goals using an app

There are lots of free tools and resources to help you get started. They both count your steps and let you set goals to work towards, so it's great way to keep track of your activity. If you have an Android or an iPhone, you can download the free apps from your app store. Walk with others. Join a walking group Sometimes it can be hard to find the motivation to get outside and get moving, but joining a walking group can really help. Together, you'll be able to explore your local area and enjoy a range of walks.

Join one of our walking challenges Become part of our team by signing up to one of our Sunday city Wellness Walks – with every route accessible to wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs – or our One Million Step Challenge.

Not only will you have a goal to work towards, but you'll also be helping us in our fight for a world where diabetes can do no harm. Find out more about walking for us. We'll be with you every step of the way.

Walking and managing your diabetes

Here we'll take you through some practical advice about snacking and managing your blood glucose (sugar) levels when walking. Walking at any time of the day can be beneficial when you have diabetes. This can be before a meal or after.

Snacking

If you have diabetes, the amount and type of food you will need when walking will depend on when you last ate, how hungry you are and your blood sugar levels. A slice of malt loaf, a yoghurt or a piece of fruit, such as banana, are good examples of pre- and post-walk snacks. Not everyone will need to have a snack before they start moving more, and what you do eat will also depend on the distance and pace of your walk. If you're walking for over an hour at a brisk to fast pace, think about having a snack during your walk.

Walking and blood sugar levels

Depending on how long you walk for, and how fast your pace is, walking can either lower or raise your blood sugar levels. If you have type 1 diabetes or treat your diabetes with medications that can lower your blood sugars, such as sulphonylureas, you should check your blood sugar levels before, during and after your walk. It's also important to make sure you carry hypo treatments and your diabetes ID with you, and to let a family member or loved one know which route you are taking. We've got more tips about managing your blood sugar levels when exercising, so that you can feel confident when walking.

Looking after your feet when walking

Walking is considered safe for most people, including all ages and fitness levels. But it's important to take extra care and look after your feet if you have diabetes. This is because you're at a greater risk of developing foot complications or diabetic neuropathy. It's important to wear socks that don't rub and shoes that fit well, provide support and are appropriate for walking.

To help prevent any problems with your feet, you should check them every day and look for any changes. Doing this after a walk is really important, as it can help you to spot any damage, such as blisters or cuts. And if you want to know more about looking after your feet, check out our page on taking care of your feet. If you're living with foot complications, you should speak to your healthcare team before you take up serious walking.

4. Walking Helps Your Heart

You probably know that regular physical activity plays a big part in heart health, but if you haven't been active in a while, you might wonder where to start. Before joining a gym or signing up for fitness classes, remember that walking offers a simple, low-cost way to become active on a regular basis.Walking regularly can benefit your heart — and overall health — in many ways.

How Does Walking Help Your Heart?

Walking is a low-impact activity that can help improve your overall health. According to the Irish Heart Foundation, walking can not only help you fight serious health problems like heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes, but it may also lower your risk for osteoporosis, breast cancer, and colon cancer.

Whether you're hoping to prevent heart disease or walking as part of a heart disease treatment plan, regular walking can help you control and manage several risk factors for heart disease by helping you:

- Lower your blood pressure
- Control your cholesterol level
- Manage your blood sugar level
- Lose weight, or stay at a healthy weight
- Cope with stress in a healthy way
- Start Walking for Heart Health

Before you start walking for heart health, take a trip to your physician's office to make sure walking is a safe activity based on your medical history and fitness level.

Your physician can tell you how often you should walk, and for how long. He or she may suggest that you follow the HSE's recommendations for physical activity in adults that include:

Children and young people (aged 2 –18)

All children and young people should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day. Include muscle strengthening, flexibility and bone-strengthening exercises three times a week

Adults (aged 18–64)

At least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity activity, five days a week (or 150 minutes a week)

Older people (aged 65+)

At least 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity activity, five days a week (or 150 minutes a week). Focus on aerobic activity, muscle strengthening and balance

Children and adults with a disability

Aim to be as active as the disability allows to meet the guideline for your age group

Once your doctor or healthcare professional says it's safe to start walking, all you'll need is a pair of comfortable shoes. It's also a good idea to wear comfortable clothes that are brighter in color, so you'll be more visible to drivers, cyclists, and other walkers

Tips for Walking for Heart Health

Start slow. Go for a 5 to 10-minute walk at first, then slowly add more time or distance as you get more comfortable walking on a regular basis.

Break up your walks throughout the day. If you don't have 30 to 40 minutes, you can break up your walks into 10-minute sessions. Set reasonable goals. Decide how often you want to walk and for how long. For example, you may want to walk for 30 minutes three times per week, then increase to four times per week or five times per week as you reach your goals.

Walk where you feel comfortable. You may want to walk in your neighborhood, at a local park, or at the nearest shopping mall. If you're walking outside, stick to sidewalks or well-lit walking paths and

10 Things You Can Do Today to Prevent/Reverse Heart Disease

- Get moving — incorporate aerobic (cardiovascular), strength, flexibility, balance and coordination into your exercise routine; the bottom line is to stay active
- Participate in a community you enjoy – family, friends, church, volunteer, workplace, book club, exercise group, etc.
- Know your numbers - Cholesterol, LDL, HDL, Triglycerides, Fasting Glucose, and in some cases hs-CRP, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, insulin levels, HbA1c, and Coronary Calcium Score. Normal Blood pressure is 130/80 or less. Normal BMI is 20 – 25.
- Eat plant strong - Eat greens, beans, vibrant colors (fruits and vegetables), whole grains, nuts and seeds. Walk toward a whole-food, plant-based diet.

- Meat
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Processed grains
- Fast food/fried food
- High added sugar
- Sweets/desserts
- High salt
- Calorie dense
- Low fiber
- Whole-food, plant-based
- Fruits
- Vegetables

- Legumes (beans, peas)
- Whole grains
- Home-cooked meals
- Nuts, seeds
- Low added sugar
- Low added salt
- Nutrient dense
- High fiber

- Read labels - including both the Nutrition Facts and the Ingredient Lists
- **Get 7-8 hours of restful sleep every night.**
- Spend quality time alone and pursue peacefulness - 15-30 minutes daily, removing yourself from life stressors. Don't sweat the small stuff. Learn and practice the Relaxation Response (Herbert Benson, MD) and learn to avoid the Fight or Flight Stress response.
- Examples: meditating, reading, T'ai Chi, yoga, exercising, music.
- Don't smoke and avoid second-hand smoke
- Turn off the TV
- Create your own Program - The bigger the investment, the bigger the return always be aware of your surroundings. Walking with a buddy can help you stay motivated and safe.

5. WALKING AND BLOOD PRESSURE REGULATION

"Walking is an aerobic activity, so it increases endurance and physical fitness, which are both benefits for heart health," Rizzo says. "Research also shows that people who walk more have a lower risk for heart disease." For instance, a 2019 study published in Preventing Chronic Disease concluded that walking is a way to encourage an active lifestyle and prevent cardiovascular disease.The heart is just like any other muscle: the more we use it, the stronger it becomes.

"All of our muscles work better when they are strong," says Damien Joyner, an ACE-certified health coach and personal trainer with Incremental Fitness in San Diego. "Think of physical activity as strength training for our heart. When the heart is stronger, it can push the blood throughout our body with less effort. Because of physical activity, our heart becomes more efficient at pushing the blood, and the force on our arteries decreases. As that force decreases in our arteries, our blood pressure is lower."

All forms of physical activity, including walking, can impact heart health and help to lower blood pressure, exercise is especially beneficial for systolic blood pressure (the first number in that mmHG reading), which can, in turn, help reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

How Long Does It Take for Walking to Lower Blood Pressure?

Walking's impact varies by the person according to their unique biology, current blood pressure level and other heart disease risk factors. However, found that six months of consistent walking "elicited a marked reduction" in blood pressure.

"Several studies point to improvements after about eight weeks of intervention" among sedentary individuals, Asche says , Overall, Joyner believes that a good estimate for noticeable changes in blood pressure would be a few weeks to a few months for consistent exercise to lower your blood pressure.

"Consistent exercise is key," he says. "Other factors like stress, diet, hydration levels, medication you are taking, and other health-related factors can also negatively or positively influence how long it may take for a blood pressure shift to occur. Aside from that, I would encourage you to not only think about the numbers, even as important as they are. Overall well-being, energy levels and feeling like you are reconnecting with your body and making progress don't have a number measurement, but are all very significant. "Just like any change in behavior, the speed with which you see changes will be dependent upon how big those changes are, adds Erin Beck, the Orange County, California-based director of education for Stride Fitness.

"Start with a shift you can maintain, check your blood pressure once per week to monitor progress, and add a new challenge to your routi ne every four weeks to see if you can make additional progress," Beck says.

The Best Walking Plan to Help Lower Blood Pressure

As you embark on this walking plan for hypertension, keep these pointers from Joyner in mind:

Don't neglect your feet: If you can't remember how long ago you bought the shoes you walk in, that's a good sign that you should invest in a new pair of walking sneakers. Shoes that are worn down on one side more than the other have less traction and uneven support or cushioning and "don't do your body any favors," . "You want your joints stacked on top of a supportive and level foundation: your shoes."

Incline can be your BFF: If you have hills, or even stairs, close to your walking path or available on your treadmill, don't avoid them. If you are just getting started at hills, ease into it and see how you feel after your first time. (Translation: The first few times, set a goal to conquer one-quarter or half of the hill, then walk back down, eventually working up to the full hill.) "Instead of longer steps, chip away at the incline in small, controlled steps, like you are switching gears," Joyner suggests. "Allow your arms to help you by swinging them and driving your elbows back."

Posture matters: Focus on keeping your joints stacked. Walk with your ears above your shoulders and your shoulders above your hips. Walk tall, and occasionally shake your arms and check in with your shoulders (relaxing them if they're creeping up toward your ears). "The more you're aware and mindful of your posture when you're walking, the more it will carry over to your everyday life," Joyner says.

Week 1: 20-minute walk five days per week

"The main goal this week is to be mindful of your posture and to reconnect with your body," says Joyner. Focus on a comfortable pace for the first 5 minutes. Then for the remaining 15 minutes, shift up to a slightly challenging pace.

Week 2: 20-minute walk five days per week

Maintain the same amount of overall time, and see if you can cover more distance in the same amount of time (20 minutes). Again, start with a comfortable pace for the first 5 minutes. Then for the remaining 15 minutes, find a more challenging pace that you can hold for the full 15 minutes.

Week 3: 30-minute walk five days per week

This week, try 10 more minutes daily and pepper in some intervals. After the 5-minute warmup, try 4 minutes at a moderate pace, then 1 minute at a very challenging pace (the latter should be like you're trying to make it across an intersection as fast as you can when the walking sign is counting down, Joyner says). "Do what is challenging to you, not someone else, though," he adds. Repeat the 4-minute moderate, 1-minute challenging interval style for four more rounds.

Week 4: 30-minute walk five days per week

Now it's time to extend the intervals. After the 5-minute warmup, try 3 minutes at a moderate pace, then 2 minutes at a challenging pace you can hold for the entire 2 minutes. "If that begins to be easy, extend the amount of time for your challenging pace by 1 additional minute," Joyner says, so 2 minutes moderate and 3 minutes challenging. Repeat these intervals for four more rounds, adjusting your pace as necessary.

How to Step Up This Walking Plan

"The intervals included in the training plan are a helpful way to mix things up," Joyner says.Beyond speed, you can "level up" a workout by changing one of these variables, so feel free to adjust accordingly as you continue into month two and beyond:

- Pace/intensity
- Terrain/incline
- Distance
- Duration

The Bottom Line

Walking is most definitely a good enough workout to improve your heart health and overall well-being. As with making any healthy habit change stick, Beck says the most important piece of any new workout plan is finding what works for you. "This may mean starting by parking in the farthest spot from the office each morning. As that walk becomes second nature, start parking farther away from the grocery store or restaurant," Beck says.

When that becomes a habit, add a daily walk—before dinner, or maybe during your lunch hour, or right when you wake up, she continues. Even just 10 minutes at a brisk pace will be enough to raise your heart rate and potentially be a boon for your blood pressure over time.

If you could use a little extra nudge to make this walking plan for better blood pressure part of your day, "put some headphones on and listen to a book, podcast or music, talk to a friend or even have a work call, all while walking. It's easier to stick to a walking routine when you know you can cross off another task off your list—or listen to something you enjoy—during the process," Asche advises. "Take your time and go at your own pace, ideally working your way up to 30 minutes or more daily."

Regular walking is a clinically effective non-pharmacological method for regulating and lowering both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Studies indicate that walking 150 minutes per week (roughly 30 minutes, five days a week) can lower blood pressure by an average of 4/2 mmHg. Benefits of Walking

for Blood Pressure Significant Risk Reduction: Every additional 1,000 steps taken daily is associated with a 17% reduction in major cardiovascular events.

Effective for High Baseline BP: The blood-pressure-lowering effect is often more pronounced in individuals with higher baseline systolic readings. For example, some studies show reductions up to 21.3 mmHg in subjects with severe hypertension (>160 mmHg). Wait and See Results: Noticeable impacts on blood pressure typically occur after 1 to 3 months of a consistent walking routine. Mechanisms of Regulation Walking regulates blood pressure through several biological pathways: Vasodilation: Walking increases the production of nitric oxide and (beta)-endorphins, which help relax and widen blood vessels (vasodilation), allowing blood to flow more easily. Reduced

Resistance: It lowers peripheral vascular resistance by decreasing sympathetic nerve activity and reducing the release of stress hormones like norepinephrine. Improved Insulin Sensitivity: Physical activity helps the body use insulin more effectively, which in turn reduces insulin-mediated sympathetic activity. Skeletal Muscle Pump: The contraction of leg muscles during walking acts as a "pump," helping push pooled venous blood back to the heart and improving overall circulation.

Recommended Walking Strategies Intensity Matters: Brisk walking (at least 3.0 mph or 100 steps per minute) generally offers greater benefits than slow strolling. Consistent Volume: Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, such as a 30-minute walk daily. Flexible Sessions: Breaking your workout into three 10-minute sessions throughout the day can be just as effective as one continuous 30-minute walk. Combined Training: Adding simple isometric exercises, like using a handgrip device while walking, can potentially double the reduction in systolic pressure.

Safety Considerations Warm-up and Cool-down: Always include a few minutes of slower walking to prevent sudden blood pressure drops that can cause light headedness or cramping. Medical Consultation: Individuals with severe hypertension or existing cardiovascular disease should consult a doctor before starting a new walking program .Gradual Increase: Start slowly if you have been sedentary to avoid musculoskeletal injuries like knee pain.

6. WALKING AND CHOLESTEROL MANAGEMENT

When it comes to lowering your cholesterol, simply increasing the number of steps you walk on a regular basis is a great start.

If your doctor tells you that you have high cholesterol, you probably have some idea of what that is—a fatty, waxy substance that ends up in your blood vessels and can clog up the works, literally. But it's a little more complicated than that. There are different types of cholesterol, both good and bad. Problems arise when too much of the bad kind of cholesterol circulates in the bloodstream. That leads to a build up of deposits can threaten to block arteries, setting the stage for some serious problems. Getting a handle on high cholesterol isn't easy—but it is doable once you understand the causes behind it and the tools available to treat it. Start here.

What Is High Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a naturally occurring compound produced by the liver that moves through the body, using the bloodstream as its very own lazy river. Just like all fats aren't bad, cholesterol itself isn't inherently bad. In fact, it plays several vital roles in your functioning, such as helping build cells, produce hormones, and make vitamins that the body needs.

You can have too much cholesterol in your blood, however. That's called high cholesterol, or hypercholesterolemia, and it can put your heart health at risk. This is especially true if it's too much of a specific type of cholesterol you may have heard referred to as "bad" cholesterol. We'll get into what that means in just a moment.

Types

Good Cholesterol vs. Bad Cholesterol

Not all cholesterol is the same. One type of cholesterol, called high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, helps you stay healthy. For that reason, it's often called "good" cholesterol. You want more of it rather than less. The other type boosts your risk of heart disease. It's called low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. That's the "bad" cholesterol mentioned above.

HDL Cholesterol

High-density lipoprotein acts like Pacman in your bloodstream, binding to LDL cholesterol and delivering it back to the liver where it's broken down and eventually passed out of the body. HDL cholesterol can't eliminate all LDL cholesterol, but having a high HDL level can be protective against heart problems like stroke or heart attack, according to the American Heart Association (AHA).

LDL Cholesterol

Low-density lipoprotein can build up on the walls of the arteries. As the deposits accumulate, they can restrict blood flow. This is a condition known as atherosclerosis, and it can lead to heart problems and other health issues.

There's also very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) cholesterol, which carries triglycerides through the bloodstream. Triglycerides are fats derived almost entirely from the foods we eat, and they can cause problems similar to LDL cholesterol. Like LDL, lower levels of triglycerides are better.

How Are Cholesterol Levels Measured?

The routine blood test that checks for cholesterol, called a lipid profile or lipid panel, reports your results as four different components:

- Total cholesterol
- LDL cholesterol
- HDL cholesterol
- Triglycerides

In the United States, cholesterol testing results are given in milligrams of cholesterol per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). Your doctor will look at all four numbers (total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides) along with your medical history to determine whether you have high cholesterol and how to manage it. Here's what's considered normal or high for each:

Total Cholesterol

This number represents the sum of your LDL, your HDL, and 20% of your triglyceride level, according to the AHA. For total cholesterol:

Below 200 mg/dL is normal.

200 to 239 mg/dL is borderline high.

240 mg/dL and above is high.

LDL Cholesterol

What's considered high for LDL depends on your unique circumstances .If you don't have heart disease or risk factors for developing heart disease:

Below 100 mg/dL is optimal.

100 to 129 mg/dL is near optimal.

130 to 159 mg/dL is borderline high.

160 to 189 mg/dL is high.

190 mg/dL and above is very high.

If you have heart disease, such as coronary artery disease or heart failure:

Below 70 mg/dL is optimal.

70-99 mg/dL is near optimal.

100-159 mg/dL is high.

160 mg/dL and above is very high.

HDL Cholesterol

With HDL cholesterol, a higher number is better. Unlike with LDL cholesterol, the ranges are the same for all groups:

60 mg/dL and above is optimal.

40 to 59 mg/dL in men or 50-59 mg/dL in women is considered good.

Below 40 mg/dL for men or below 50 mg/dL for women is considered poor.

Triglycerides For levels of these blood fats:

Below 150 mg/dL is desirable.

150 to 199 mg/dL is borderline high.

200 to 499 mg/dL is high.

500 mg/dL and above is very high.

When to Test

When to Get Your Cholesterol Checked Everybody should get a cholesterol test at some point. When and how often depends on your age and whether you have certain health conditions. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) makes the following recommendations for cholesterol testing in the general population:

Children: At least once between ages 9 and 11

Adolescents: At least once between ages 17 and 21

Healthy adults up to age 40: Every four to six years

Children with obesity or diabetes may need to be tested more often. The same goes for adults who have heart disease, diabetes, or a family history of high cholesterol. Talk to your doctor about the right schedule for you and your children. After age 40, your doctor will evaluate your risk of having a heart attack or stroke within the next ten years. This risk is based on your current health issues and how well they’re managed, including high blood pressure, diabetes, and your cholesterol level. The results of that evaluation will help your doctor decide how often you should get your cholesterol tested.You can expect your cholesterol testing to get more frequent as you get older. For example, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a division of the NIH, recommends that people older than 65 have their cholesterol tested every year.

What Causes High Cholesterol?

High cholesterol can result from factors both within and beyond your control, according to the AHA. These include: A high-fat diet, Being overweight or having obesity, Excess alcohol intake ,Having familial hypercholesterolemia, a genetic condition that raises your cholesterol, Lack of exercise, Older age, Smoking or exposure to tobacco smoke ,Stress.

What Are the Symptoms of High Cholesterol?

There's bad news here: High cholesterol has no symptoms. You could have it and not know it until it causes significant heart health problems, such as atherosclerosis, which can lead to chest pain, heart attack, or stroke. The only way to know you that you have high cholesterol is to have a cholesterol test. This is why routine lipid testing is so important, particularly as you get older.

How High Cholesterol Affects the Body?

When your cardiovascular system is working properly, oxygen-rich blood flows freely from your heart through a network of blood vessels, called arteries, to all the organs and tissues in your body. High cholesterol can limit or even cut off the flow of blood through certain arteries by contributing to the buildup of a sticky substance on the artery walls called plaque, a process called atherosclerosis .Plaque can accumulate in any of your arteries. Depending on which part of your body the clogged-up artery was supplying, this can result in: Coronary artery disease (CAD), caused by plaque build ups in the arteries that supply blood to your heart (called the coronary arteries). CAD can cause a heart attack. Carotid artery disease, caused by plaque build ups in the arteries that supply blood to the front of your brain. This can cause a stroke.

High blood pressure (hypertension) due to plaque build ups that narrow and stiffen your arteries, requiring greater pressure to pump blood through them.

Peripheral artery disease (PAD), which occurs due to plaque build ups in the arteries that supply blood to your arms and legs. PAD often accompanies CAD.

What Health Conditions Can Affect Cholesterol Levels?

Numerous medical conditions can raise your cholesterol, thereby putting you at higher risk of cardiovascular disease and other issues. Conditions known to increase cholesterol include:

Chronic kidney disease (CKD). Per the Cleveland Clinic, CKD causes you to have a higher level of triglycerides in your blood and also raises the level of very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) cholesterol. At the same time, CKD causes your level of HDL, the helpful cholesterol, to decrease. Plaque tends to build up more quickly in the arteries of people with CKD, so people with this condition face a greater risk of coronary artery disease. (Conversely, high cholesterol can contribute to the development of chronic kidney disease. So the relationship goes both ways.)HIV. Inflammation caused by the disease can speed up plaque accumulations in your arteries.

Thyroid disease. When your body produces too little thyroid hormone—a condition called hypothyroidism—it causes a slowdown in metabolism that leads to higher cholesterol levels. This happens through a couple of mechanisms. When thyroid hormone is decreased, the number of receptors for LDL on the

surface of the liver also decreases; as a result, the liver can't remove as much bad cholesterol from the bloodstream and LDL goes up. The reduction of thyroid hormone also decreases the breakdown of fatty acids, leading to higher triglycerides.

Lupus. The ongoing inflammation that characterizes this autoimmune disease raises your bad cholesterol while lowering your good cholesterol (even if you eat a perfectly healthy diet). Chronic inflammation also accelerates the build up of plaque in your arteries.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). This disease causes hormone imbalances and can lead to weight gain, especially in your belly. This can cause a drop in your HDL cholesterol and a rise in triglycerides, increasing your risk of heart disease as well as diabetes, per Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Diabetes. This condition can lower your good cholesterol while raising your bad cholesterol and triglycerides, according to the AHA, leading to what's known as diabetic dyslipidemia. Dyslipidemia is a term for abnormal cholesterol levels.

Lifestyle Changes That Help Lower Cholesterol

Your doctor will base your treatment strategy on the results of your blood tests, as well as your own personal and family history with high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, and other risk factors. If you're borderline high, you might be able to manage your cholesterol through lifestyle changes. If this isn't enough to rein them in, cholesterol-lowering medication may need to become part of your overall approach. These healthy habits can have a big impact on cholesterol levels.

Clean up your diet. Follow an eating pattern that includes plenty of high-fiber fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit red meat in favor of fatty fish, like salmon. Avoid processed foods that are high in saturated fat, sugar, or both. The Mayo Clinic recommends the Mediterranean diet.

Drink less alcohol. Alcohol raises your cholesterol and your triglycerides, according to the CDC. Guidelines recommend no more than one drink a day for women of any age and men older than 65, and no more than two drinks a day for men age 65 or younger.

Get more exercise. Moving more—think a brisk walk or bike ride—can lower your LDL and raise your HDL, it may help you slim down, further lowering cholesterol. Build up to at least 30 minutes a day of aerobic activity, five days a week, plus strength-building exercise twice a week.

Quit smoking if you smoke. Smoking lowers "good" cholesterol levels and heightens the risk of coronary artery disease in people who already have high cholesterol.

Lose weight (even a small amount). Dropping just a few extra pounds can lower total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides, and raise levels of good HDL cholesterol,

"We don't know the full mechanism of the benefit of exercise, but we know it does happen. Aerobic exercise is known to help raise HDL [or high-density lipoprotein, the 'good' cholesterol] and lower triglycerides, a type of fat in the blood "Any movement that gets your heart rate up has some beneficial effects not just on cholesterol but also on blood pressure."

Walking at a steady pace checks off both boxes. "And it's an easy form exercise to work in throughout your day. One study found that regular, moderate-intensity walking reduced risk of high cholesterol to a similar degree as running at a vigorous pace.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise every week to help lower your low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol—a.k.a., the "bad" cholesterol—and reduce high blood pressure. If you can bump that up to 200 minutes a week, your health benefits also increase. If that sounds like a lot, keep in mind that it breaks down to only half an hour five days a week—or a little more than 20 minutes every day—and that you don't need to get in all that activity in one go. Sneaking in 10 minutes here and 10 minutes there totally counts and adds up fast. Wherever you are on your fitness journey, we've got a plan to help get your steps up and your cholesterol and risk of cardiovascular disease down.

Plan 1: Make Walking a Habit

Despite the AHA recommendation for 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week, if you've been rather inactive until now, any amount of extra movement is, ahem, a step in the right direction. "For people who are sedentary, even 10 or 15 minutes a day can have some significant benefits," says Dr. Blumenthal. Research bears this out: A study in the Lancet found that just 15 minutes a day of vigorous exercise reduces the risk of dying by 17% compared to those who don't exercise at all. So don't feel bad about starting from square one and just trying to squeeze in more steps wherever you can. Your privacy is important to us.

Make a point to start walking a little bit every single day. "Keep it super simple," suggests Pata. "Map out how many minutes a day you can dedicate to a walk." If weekends are better for you, for instance, aim to get in a longer walk on Saturday and Sunday, then shorter walks during weekdays—like a five-minute outing each morning and another 10 minutes at lunchtime. To help you stick to the plan, write down a few ways you'll stay motivated.

Schedule a walk with a friend every Monday and Wednesday evening (or whichever days work for you) to hold each other accountable. Instead of walking in your neighbourhood , try a new area of town. "Curiosity can increase motivation, and the new location will help make time go quickly," she says Create a new playlist. "Music you love creates good feelings, which you'll then associate with walking," says Pata. "It helps change the psychology of exercise. "Consider getting a new pair of sneakers you'll wear only for walking to help make your daily exercise a ritual.

Plan 2: Progressively Get More Steps

For continued improvements in your cholesterol levels and overall health, making your walking routine something you'll do consistently is key. One study looking at different forms of physical activity found that a single bout of aerobic exercise—in this case, running—had no effect on cholesterol but 160 minutes of aerobic exercise for 18 weeks led to a significant increase in HDL cholesterol.

"You might not get in those [recommended] 150 minutes every single week, but if you can get pretty close to that, over the course of two to three months it should lead to measurable benefits on your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol," says Dr. Blumenthal.

Use this four-week plan to make walking more of a can't-miss activity. You'll be moving a little bit every single day at a moderate pace—which should feel around a five or six on a rate of perceived exertion (RPE) scale of one to 10—and working your way up to 30 minutes of walking per day.

breaking your walks up into bite-size pieces to make them feel manageable and to help build a sense of accomplishment with each day you check off. "Start with small increments of time, short and sweet," she says. "That way, you can achieve success with every outing and not get discouraged."

Week 1: Walk a total of 10 minutes per day at a moderate pace. If you prefer, break it up into two five-minute sessions. Keep in mind that these short increments are intentional to help you build motivation, says Pata: The focus here is on pushing a continuous moderate pace to keep each burst of activity purposeful—versus simply getting in more steps.

Week 2: Walk a total of 15 minutes per day at a moderate pace. Walk for five minutes in the morning to start the day, and another 10 minutes later in the day (or vice versa).

Week 3: Walk a total of 20 minutes per day at a moderate pace. Walk for 10 minutes in the a.m. and another 10 minutes later in the day, or do a full session of 20 minutes whenever is easiest for you.

Week 4: Walk for a total of 30 minutes per day. Either break it up throughout the day as you have been doing—if that has become your rhythm—or do a full session of 30 minutes. Bonus: You'll be getting above the 200 minutes per week mark, where you'll notice greater cholesterol-reducing benefits.

After four weeks, when walking has hopefully become a habit, start incorporating different intensities. Walk faster for a few minutes, and then slow down—in other words, do some interval walks. Check out Plan 3 below for ideas on how to do just that.

Plan 3: Pick Up Your Walking Pace .For extra heart-healthy benefits, you don't necessarily need to start running or even go as super speedy as racewalkers do (unless you want to!). That said, picking up the pace on your walks even just a bit will boost the heart benefits.

Research has shown that higher-intensity aerobic exercise—think of an RPE between five and eight—effectively lowers LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. Walking at a very relaxed rate will have less of an effect. aiming for a pace of at least three miles per hour (mph) and challenging yourself to increase that to a brisker pace of up to four mph for some of your outings (or short intervals during a walk).

In this plan, each week builds up toward a power-walking pace, which is slightly more vigorous than a moderate pace. Aim for an RPE of seven or higher, a speed at which you can speak in choppy versus full sentences. "Challenging yourself by increasing the duration or the intensity will help prevent your body from hitting a plateau," she says.

Week 1: Walk a total of 30 minutes at a moderate-to-brisk pace: After four minutes, power walk for one minute, then repeat.

Week 2: Walk a total of 30 minutes at a moderate-to-brisk pace: After three minutes, power walk for two minutes, then repeat.

Week 3: Walk a total of 30 minutes at a moderate-to-brisk pace: After two minutes, power walk for three minutes, then repeat.

Week 4: Walk a total of 30 minutes at a brisk pace: After one minute, power walk for four minutes, then repeat.

When your month of brisk walks is done, challenge yourself to keep going—and continue progressing—by sustaining your power-walking pace for the entire session a couple times per week.

Make the Most of Your Routine

Here's to taking steps toward lowering your cholesterol numbers! Along with following the treatment plan your doctor has determined is right for your high cholesterol, be sure to get their OK for any new fitness routine you begin. And talk with them about how to follow a heart-healthy diet: Our four-week eating plan for lowering cholesterol plan can help you kickstart smart habits. Along with lowering your stress, these are all things that will get make your heart—and the rest of your body—happy.

7. WALKING AND CANCER PREVENTION

Take a hike! How walks reduce cancer risk, manage symptoms ,Taking regular walks may help reduce cancer risk.

Light- to medium-intensity exercise, such as regular brisk walks, reduce the risk for developing cancer and other illnesses. It plays a key role in cancer prevention and recovery. Regular exercise may reduce the risk for developing cancer, help patients with cancer stay strong during treatment and contribute to rebuilding strength and stamina in survivorship. But that doesn't mean you have to join a gym, learn how to operate universal weight machines or go to spin class to get the benefits of exercise. Light- to medium-intensity exercise, such as regular brisk walks, is all it takes to significantly reduce the risk for developing cancer and other illnesses, such as heart disease.

An extensive study by the American Cancer Society found that among the exercises that may improve health and reduce disease risk, walking gives the most bang for the buck. The study, involving about 140,000 people, found that even walking at leisurely levels reduces cancer mortality. Study participants, with an average age of 69, said walking was their only form of exercise. "Going for a walk at an average-to-brisk pace can provide people with a tremendous health benefit. It's free, easy, and can be done anywhere ".For many older people, or those recovering from a serious illness, walking is the best way to start a regular exercise regimen. For those who are physically able, walking requires no training or special equipment other than comfortable shoes. And it offers many of the same health benefits as an intense session at the gym.

"Walking is a perfect exercise for getting your heart rate up, burning calories and boosting your immune system, "So, there are a lot of benefits to walking and it is easy for most patients to do."

Walking to manage symptoms and side effects, Getting started with a walking routine.

If you've been diagnosed with cancer and want to get a second opinion on your diagnosis or treatment options, call us or chat online with a member of our team.

The benefits of exercise, including taking regular walks, go far beyond reducing cancer risk. Regular exercise strengthens bones, keeps joint lubricated and reduces the risk for developing heart disease.

Many of the other benefits of exercise, not the least of which is controlling weight, are linked directly to a reduced risk for developing many of the most common cancers.

According to the World Cancer Research Fund: "There's strong evidence that moderate-intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking) as well as vigorous physical activity (including running, fast cycling and aerobics) decreases the risk of colon, post-menopausal breast cancer and womb cancer. There's also strong evidence that aerobic physical activity, including walking, can help you keep a

healthy weight .Being obese or overweight is one of the most serious risk factors for developing cancer and it has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. According to the ACS, excess weight contributes to increased risk for developing these cancers:

- Bladder cancer
- Breast cancer
- Colorectal cancer
- Endometrial cancer
- Esophageal cancer
- Head and neck cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Leukemia
- Liver cancer
- Lung cancer
- Myeloma
- Stomach cancer

More than 40 percent of Americans are obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), raising concerns of future increased incidence of cancer, especially among younger adults.

"We know that the lifetime risk for a number of cancers is very much influenced by weight and obesity, "One can only anticipate a wave of these cancers if we can't attack this problem. We have to figure out a way of dealing with this or we are just going to have cancers that could have been prevented because of this problem of obesity."

What's the link?

It's true that weight loss really starts in the kitchen, not at the gym or on a treadmill. But the combination of eating fewer calories in your daily diet and burning more calories through exercise eventually results in weight loss and better health.

And exercising, including talking regular walks, are linked to other benefits that help manage weight and reduce cancer risk, in the following ways.

Regulating hormones: Exercise may influence the levels of certain hormones, such as estrogen and insulin, which are linked to cancer development. Supporting the immune system: Regular exercise strengthens the immune system, helping it better detect and attack cancer cells.

Reducing inflammation: Exercise helps reduce systemic inflammation, another cancer risk factor.

Improving digestive health: Exercise accelerates digestion and helps health-promoting gut flora flourish.

"There's emerging data in the cancer world [about] exercise and the net effects, which impacts things like obesity and cellular stress, [so] it's not surprising that there's overlap in those risk factors.

How much walking reduces cancer risk?

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends weekly moderate-intensity activity, which includes a brisk walk, of at least 150 minutes. If you are able to do more vigorous or intense exercises, the ACS recommends 75 minutes a week.

But how much walking you should do doesn't always align with how much you are able to do.

"There can be a fine line between what your body can and cannot do,"Sometimes you've got to listen to it."The bottom line: Do what you can when you can.

Walking to manage symptoms and side effects

For those already diagnosed with cancer, and who are in or have completed treatment, physical activity is often an important ingredient in their recovery.

"A lot of my patients, when they come to physical therapy, they think, 'Oh, I'm going to be doing this intense exercise. I can't do that. I'm not in shape enough,'" Bowers says. "Light-intensity exercises are more appropriate for older people or for people that have been diagnosed with cancer. If you exercise too intensely, you can cause excessive fatigue or tiredness, muscle soreness. Or even injury. So doing the light-intensity exercise has been shown to be more beneficial for offsetting the side effects of the cancer. "Walking may be the perfect exercise for those who are in cancer treatment or moving into survivorship. It's low impact, may be done at any time of day and offers multiple benefits for those with challenging treatment side effects.

The benefits of taking regular walks include:

- Reducing stress, anxiety and depression
- Managing pain
- Building strength
- Increasing appetite
- Improving sleep
- Reducing the risk of a cancer recurrence or secondary cancer

And while it may sound counterintuitive, walking is often a remedy for fatigue, a common cancer treatment side effect. The ACS says that almost all cancer patients report experiencing fatigue beyond what they may consider normal tiredness.

Exercise helped him overcome extreme fatigue during and after his cancer treatments. "Sometimes, you really have to push yourself. "Look at it this way: Some things you have some control over that can reduce symptoms, and physical activity is one of them."

Getting started with a walking routine

Starting a walking routine couldn't be easier. Just lace up the shoes and go. Still, Bowers says, it's important to start slow and work up to more frequent and longer walks. "You want to prevent overuse injuries like tendonitis or plantar fasciitis or Achilles tendonitis," he says. "People may even develop knee pain by ramping up their walking program too quickly. It takes several weeks for your body to get used to an exercise routine. I tell people to start off slowly, maybe a couple times a week up to 30 minutes at a time. Then gradually increase from there. "What follows are some other tips to help get started on walking routine.

Talk to your doctor: It's important to consult with your doctor before starting any new exercise regimen. Also, call your doctor if you are feeling ill, lightheaded or having difficult joint pain.

Wear comfortable shoes: Make sure your footwear offers support and doesn't cause callouses or blister .Stay hydrated: It's important to have some water before, during and after your walk.

Stay fuelled , Have a light bite to eat before you walk, especially if you walk before breakfast. "You don't want to get dehydrated or have your blood sugars get too low," Bowers says.

Stretch: Warm up and stretch your calves, hamstrings and quadriceps to help prevent injury.

Brush aside excuses: A busy schedule or bad weather aren't good reasons not to take a walk or to exercise, Bowers say. "Some people have a hard time making a commitment or fitting a 20- or 30-minute walk into their schedule," Bowers says. "So, I tell people to break it up and do 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening afternoon. And if the weather's bad, you can go walk up and down stairs or even go to a shopping mall or large grocery stores and walk around there." If you've been diagnosed with cancer and want to get a second opinion on your diagnosis or treatment visit a doctor and consult.

8. WALKING AND BONE STRENGTH.

While walking may not be a high-intensity workout, it certainly comes with many health benefits**. Not only is walking great for heart health, boosting your mood, maintaining healthy weight, and improving circulation, but also for keeping your muscles and joints strong and healthy.**

When you have healthy and strong muscles and joints, you're less susceptible to injury and reduce your risk of osteoporosis or other bone-density related conditions. If you're looking for a simple, affordable way to get more movement in your life, start a walking program.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends incorporating **at least 30 minutes** of walking each day for five days a week to see the benefits of walking on the musculoskeletal system (muscles, bones, ligaments, tendons and joints). Learn about the benefits of walking for bone health and ways to get started below.

Benefits of Walking for Bone Health:

- Easy and gentle on joints
- Builds and strengthens muscles
- Helps maintain bone mass
- Slows the development of arthritis
- Reduces risk of osteoporosis
- Increases joint flexibility and range of motion
- Regular walking may help prevent a fall
- Aids in joint fluid circulation, which provides essential oxygen and nutrients
- Reduces risk of hip fracture
- Helps you stay mobile later in life
- Lowers the likelihood of musculoskeletal injuries
- Increases spinal stability
- Improves posture
- May reduce low back pain

Bone health: Tips to keep your bones healthy

Protecting bone health is important throughout your life. Understand how diet, exercise and other lifestyle choices can affect bones.

Bones do a lot for your body. They provide structure, protect organs, anchor muscles and store calcium. While it's important to build strong, healthy bones

during your childhood and teen years, you can take steps to protect bone health when you're an adult too.

Why is bone health important?

Bones change all the time. The body constantly makes new bone and breaks down old bone. This process is called remodeling. When you're young, new bone is made faster than old bone is broken down. So the amount of bone mass you have goes up. Most people reach peak bone mass around age 30. After that, bone remodeling continues. But you lose slightly more bone mass than you gain.

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become weak and easily broken. How likely you are to develop osteoporosis depends on how much bone mass you have by the time you're 30 and how quickly you lose it after that. The higher your peak bone mass, the more bone you have built up. The more bone you have built up, the less likely you are to develop osteoporosis as you get older.

What affects bone health?

Lots of things can affect bone health. For example:

- **The amount of calcium in your diet**. A diet low in calcium may lead to low bone density, early bone loss and easily broken bones.
- **Physical activity**. Exercise makes bones stronger. People who aren't physically active have a higher risk of osteoporosis than people who exercise regularly.
- **Tobacco and alcohol use**. Using tobacco, especially smoking and vaping, can weaken bones and raise the risk of osteoporosis. Regularly having more than one alcoholic drink a day for women or two alcoholic drinks a day for men also may raise the risk of osteoporosis.
- **Sex.** Females are at higher risk of osteoporosis than males. That's because females have less bone tissue than males do.
- **Size and age**. People who have a body mass index of 19 or less or who have a small body frame are at higher risk of osteoporosis. That's because they typically have less bone mass to draw from as they age. Bones also become thinner and weaker as people get older.
- **Race and family history**. People of white or Asian descent are at a higher risk of osteoporosis than other people. People who have a parent with osteoporosis are at higher risk too. A family history of broken bones also raises the risk.
- **Hormone levels**. Hormones affect bones. Too much thyroid hormone can cause bone loss. And due to dropping estrogen levels, there's usually a lot of bone loss around the time of menopause. Before menopause, people who

don't have their periods for a long time — a condition called amenorrhea — have a higher risk of osteoporosis. **Low testosterone levels can cause a loss of bone mass.**

Taking some medicines for a long time may damage bones. Examples include:

- Hormone medicines used to treat breast cancer and prostate cancer.
- Medicines used to prevent seizures.
- Medicines used to treat thyroid diseases.
- Glucocorticoid steroids.
- Adrenocorticotropic hormone.
- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.
- Thiazolidinediones.
- Proton pump inhibitors.

Some medical conditions also can affect bone health. For example, having an eating disorder such as anorexia raises the risk of osteoporosis because not eating enough and being underweight weakens bones. Medical conditions such as thyroid diseases, inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis and Cushing syndrome can raise the risk of bone loss.

What can I do to keep my bones healthy?

The following steps may help prevent or slow bone loss:

Include plenty of calcium in your diet. For adults ages 19 to 50 and men ages 51 to 70, the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) is 1,000 milligrams (mg) of calcium a day. The recommendation goes to 1,200 mg a day for women age 51 and older and for men age 71 and older.

Good sources of calcium include dairy products, turnip greens, salmon and canned salmon with bones, sardines, tuna, and soy products, such as tofu. If it's hard to get enough calcium from your diet, ask your healthcare professional about taking a calcium supplement.

Get enough vitamin D. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium. For adults ages 19 to 70, the RDA of vitamin D is 600 international units (IUs) a day. The recommendation goes to 800 IUs a day for adults age 71 and older.

Good sources of vitamin D include oily fish, such as salmon, trout, tuna and mackerel. Some foods also have vitamin D added to them, such as milk, cereals

and orange juice. Sunlight helps the body make vitamin D too. If you're worried about getting enough vitamin D, ask your healthcare professional about taking a supplement.

Stay active. Weight-bearing exercises can help you build strong bones and slow bone loss. Examples include brisk walking, jogging, dancing, climbing stairs, and playing soccer, tennis and pickleball.

Don't use tobacco or drink too much. If you'd like help to stop using tobacco, talk to your healthcare professional. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. For healthy adults, that means up to one drink a day for women and up to two drinks a day for men.

Ask about medicines. If you have to take any medicine for a long time, ask your healthcare professional if that might affect your bones. If so, talk about steps you can take to keep your bones healthy.

Talk to your healthcare professional. If you're worried about bone health or you have risk factors for osteoporosis, talk to your healthcare professional about bone health if you break a bone when you're older than 50. You may need a bone density test. The results of that test show your level of bone density. The test results also can help your care team check your rate of bone loss and other measures of bone health. Using that information along with your risk factors, your healthcare professional can decide if medicine to help slow bone loss may be a good choice for you.

9. WALKING AND JOINT HEALTH.

Person walking with healthy joints highlighted

Joint pain and stiffness are common complaints, especially as we age. While it might seem counterintuitive, movement is often the best medicine for keeping your joints healthy and mobile. Among all forms of exercise, walking stands out as a gentle yet incredibly effective way to support joint health, reduce pain, and even slow the progression of conditions like arthritis.

How Walking Benefits Your Joints

Our joints are complex structures, relying on cartilage, synovial fluid, and surrounding muscles and ligaments to function smoothly. Walking positively impacts all these components:

1. Lubricates Joints

Joints are lubricated by synovial fluid, which acts like oil in an engine, reducing friction and allowing smooth movement. When you walk, the movement of your joints helps to circulate this fluid, ensuring that cartilage (the slippery tissue covering the ends of bones) remains well-nourished and hydrated. This lubrication is crucial for preventing stiffness and pain.

2. Strengthens Supporting Muscles

The muscles surrounding your joints play a vital role in providing stability and support. Regular walking strengthens the muscles in your legs, hips, and core, which in turn reduces the stress on your knee and hip joints. Stronger muscles act as shock absorbers, protecting the cartilage from excessive wear and tear.

3. Maintains Cartilage Health

Cartilage doesn't have a direct blood supply; it receives nutrients from the synovial fluid. The compression and decompression that occur during walking act like a sponge, squeezing out old fluid and drawing in new, nutrient-rich fluid. This process is essential for maintaining the health and integrity of your cartilage, which can otherwise thin and break down over time.

4. Reduces Inflammation

Chronic inflammation can contribute to joint pain and the progression of arthritis. Regular, moderate-intensity walking has anti-inflammatory effects throughout the body. By reducing systemic inflammation, walking can help alleviate joint discomfort and protect against further damage.

5. Aids in Weight Management

Excess body weight puts significant additional stress on weight-bearing joints like the knees, hips, and ankles. Even a small amount of weight loss can dramatically reduce this load, leading to less pain and improved joint function. Walking is an excellent tool for calorie expenditure and weight management.

6. Improves Flexibility and Range of Motion

Consistent movement through walking helps to maintain and improve the flexibility and range of motion in your joints. This can prevent stiffness and make everyday activities easier to perform.

Walking with Arthritis or Joint Pain

If you have arthritis or existing joint pain, walking might seem daunting, but it's often recommended by doctors. The key is to start slowly and listen to your body:

- **Start Gently**: Begin with short walks (5-10 minutes) and gradually increase duration and intensity as tolerated.
- **Choose Low-Impact Surfaces**: Walk on softer surfaces like grass, dirt paths, or a track instead of concrete or asphalt.
- **Wear Supportive Shoes**: Proper footwear with good cushioning and support is crucial.
- **Warm-Up and Cool-Down**: Begin with a few minutes of gentle movement and end with light stretching.
- **Listen to Your Body**: If you experience sharp pain, stop. Mild discomfort is normal when starting, but severe pain is a sign to rest or consult a healthcare professional.
- **Consider Water Walking**: If land-based walking is too painful, try walking in a pool, where the buoyancy of the water reduces stress on your joints.

Walking is a simple, accessible, and powerful exercise for maintaining and improving joint health. By lubricating your joints, strengthening supporting muscles, nourishing cartilage, reducing inflammation, and aiding in weight management, regular walks can help you stay mobile, reduce pain, and enjoy an active life for years to come. So, don't let joint concerns keep you sedentary; embrace the power of walking for happier, healthier joints.

Walking may seem like the simplest of exercises, but when it comes to joint health, it’s one of the most powerful tools we have. If you don’t suffer from severe arthritis or advanced joint damage, regular walking can help keep your joints lubricated, your muscles strong, and your cartilage nourished — all while improving circulation, mood, and longevity.

In short, walking is medicine for your joints — and it's free, accessible, and effective at any age.

Why Walking Is So Good for Your Joints

Your joints are designed to move. When we stay still for too long, fluid around the cartilage thickens and movement becomes stiff or uncomfortable. Walking stimulates circulation and keeps that synovial fluid — the natural lubricant inside the joints — moving.

Each step you take helps:

- Circulate nutrients to the cartilage, keeping it healthy and resilient
- Strengthen the muscles that support the hips, knees, and ankles
- Maintain bone density through gentle, weight-bearing activity
- Enhance flexibility and balance, reducing risk of falls
- Unlike high-impact activities such as running or jumping, walking delivers these benefits with minimal stress to the joints — making it one of the safest and most sustainable forms of exercise for joint preservation.

How Walking Supports Healthy Knees, Hips, and Ankles

1. Lubricates and Nourishes the Joints

Every step acts like a mini pump, drawing fluid in and out of the cartilage. This process supplies oxygen and nutrients while flushing away waste products — essentially "feeding" the joint.

2. Builds the Muscles That Protect the Joints

Walking strengthens the quadriceps, hamstrings, glutes, and calf muscles — all of which stabilise and align the joints. When these muscles are strong, less pressure is placed on the cartilage itself, reducing wear and tear over time.

3. Improves Circulation and Reduces Stiffness

Better blood flow means more oxygen and nutrients delivered to the tissues around your joints. This helps to reduce stiffness, particularly first thing in the morning or after sitting for long periods.

4. Supports Healthy Weight

Excess body weight puts additional load on the joints — especially the knees. Walking burns calories efficiently and helps maintain a healthy weight, which significantly reduces stress on joint surfaces.

5. Boosts Balance and Coordination

Walking strengthens the muscles around the hips and ankles that help maintain stability. This improves balance and reduces the likelihood of falls, especially as we age.

How Much Walking Is Enough?

For most people, the ideal target is **around 30 minutes a day, five times a week** — though even shorter bouts are beneficial. The key is consistency, not intensity.

Tips for safe walking:

Choose flat, even surfaces to start with if you have mild joint discomfort.

Wear supportive shoes with cushioned soles.

Begin with 10-minute walks and build up gradually.

Warm up before and stretch afterwards, especially the calves, hamstrings, and hips.

When Walking Helps — and When It Doesn’t

Walking is highly beneficial for mild or early-stage joint stiffness, post-surgery recovery, or general maintenance. It can even help delay the onset of arthritis by improving strength and mobility.

However, if you have severe arthritis, bone-on-bone pain, or significant swelling, walking may need to be modified or temporarily reduced. In those cases, lower-impact alternatives such as cycling, water walking, or swimming may be better until the joint is stabilised. Always check with your orthopaedic or physiotherapy team before starting or changing any exercise routine.

10. WALKING AND LUNG CAPACITY

Walking is one of the simplest and most powerful forms of exercise. You do not need a gym membership, expensive equipment, or even a trainer to stay fit. Just 30 minutes of brisk walking every day can have an incredible impact on your overall health. From improving heart function and mental clarity to strengthening bones and aiding weight management, this easy activity can truly transform your life.Yes, walking significantly improves lung function. While it doesn't physically increase the maximum volume of the lungs, it improves breathing efficiency—making your respiratory muscles stronger and allowing your body to process and deliver oxygen much more effectively .

What is Brisk Walking?

Brisk walking means walking at a pace that increases your heart rate and breathing but still allows you to hold a conversation. It is faster than a casual stroll but not as intense as running. For most people, this feels like walking with purpose — about 4 to 6 kilometers per hour. The key is consistency. Doing it for at least 30 minutes a day helps you stay fit, active, and energetic.

1. Strengthens the Heart and Improves Circulation

When you walk briskly, your heart pumps faster, increasing blood circulation and improving oxygen supply throughout the body. Regular walking lowers bad cholesterol, raises good cholesterol, and helps regulate blood pressure. It also reduces the risk of heart attack, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases. Over time, your heart muscles become stronger, and your body becomes more efficient at delivering oxygen to your organs.

2. Aids Weight Management Naturally

Brisk walking burns calories efficiently and helps maintain a healthy body weight. It activates your metabolism, supports fat loss, and tones the muscles of your legs, thighs, and abdomen. People who walk daily are more likely to keep their weight stable because walking also helps reduce appetite and improve digestion. Even after your walk, your body continues to burn calories as your metabolism remains active.

3. Boosts Mood and Reduces Stress

Feeling stressed or anxious? Walking is one of the best natural mood lifters. When you walk briskly, your body releases endorphins — hormones that reduce stress and make you feel happier. It also improves sleep patterns and mental alertness.

Many people find walking outdoors in fresh air helps them clear their mind, stay focused, and think more positively.

4. Strengthens Bones and Joints

Brisk walking is a low-impact exercise, which means it is gentle on your joints while still strengthening them. It increases bone density, which helps prevent osteoporosis and reduces the risk of fractures as you age. Walking also improves flexibility, posture, and muscle strength around your knees and hips. For people with mild joint pain or arthritis, regular walking can reduce stiffness and improve movement over time.

5. Improves Digestion and Gut Health

Did you know walking after meals can help your digestive system work better? Brisk walking encourages better bowel movements and reduces bloating. It also enhances the function of the stomach and intestines by improving blood flow to the digestive organs. People who walk regularly often experience fewer digestive problems and better nutrient absorption.

6. Supports Brain Health and Memory

Walking has amazing effects on your brain too. It improves blood flow to the brain, enhancing focus, concentration, and memory. Research shows that regular walkers are less likely to experience cognitive decline or dementia in later life. It keeps your brain active, alert, and better able to handle daily challenges.

7. Enhances Lung Function and Immunity

Brisk walking improves lung capacity by increasing oxygen intake. Over time, your lungs work more efficiently, helping you breathe better and feel more energetic. Walking also boosts your immune system by improving blood circulation and reducing inflammation. Regular walkers are less likely to fall sick because their bodies become more resistant to infections.

8. Helps Regulate Blood Sugar Levels

For people struggling with high blood sugar or diabetes, brisk walking is a natural way to keep glucose levels in check. Walking after meals helps your body utilize sugar effectively by improving insulin sensitivity. This simple habit can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and other metabolic disorders when combined with a healthy diet and lifestyle.

9. Promotes Longevity and Overall Well-being

Studies suggest that people who walk daily tend to live longer, healthier lives. The benefits of walking go beyond physical health — it enhances emotional stability, confidence, and motivation. Just 30 minutes a day can improve your energy, mood, and sense of accomplishment. It is truly a lifetime investment in your well-being.

How to Get Started with Brisk Walking

If you are new to walking, start slow and gradually increase your pace. Choose comfortable shoes, maintain a straight posture, and keep your arms swinging naturally. You can walk outdoors in a park, around your neighborhood, or even indoors on a treadmill. Try to walk at the same time each day to build a habit. Stay hydrated, listen to music or a podcast, and most importantly, enjoy the journey.

How Brisk Walking Helps Strengthens Breathing Muscles: Brisk walking engages the diaphragm and intercostal muscles (between your ribs), making them stronger and allowing for deeper, less labored breathing .

Improves Oxygen Efficiency: It enhances the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your lungs so your body absorbs and utilizes oxygen more effectively.

Builds Lung Endurance : It conditions your body to handle stress during physical activity, reducing the feeling of breathlessness during daily tasks.

Tips to Maximize the Benefit Pacing: Aim for a pace that gets your heart rate up and makes you breathe heavier, but still allows you to hold a short conversation (moderate-intensity).

Consistency: The American Lung Association recommends at least 30 minutes of brisk physical activity, five days a week. Breathing Technique: Focus on deep, rhythmic belly breathing (inhaling through your nose and exhaling through pursed lips) while maintaining good posture to prevent compressing your chest.

Our lungs serve as the body's primary organs for supplying oxygen, which is essential for maintaining the health of our other organs. Enhancing lung capacity and breathing efficiency is beneficial for everyone, from athletes to the elderly, and is not just necessary for people with respiratory conditions. You may combat breathing problems and achieve general lung health by engaging in certain workouts, making good lifestyle choices, and maintaining awareness of respiratory health.

Conclusion

Just 30 minutes of brisk walking every day can truly transform your health. It strengthens your heart, clears your mind, tones your body, and keeps diseases away. You do not need special equipment or a gym — only your determination to stay healthy. Start today, take that first step, and experience the powerful difference that walking can bring to your life.

Here’s a guide to help you enhance your lung capacity with targeted breathing techniques, along with some interesting facts and myths about respiratory health.

Tips to Improve Lung Capacity and Breathing Efficiency

1. Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, sometimes known as "belly breathing," focuses on the diaphragm, the muscle that regulates breathing beneath your lungs. Most people's lung capacity is limited because they rely too much on their chest muscles. Over time, diaphragmatic breathing expands lung capacity and promotes deeper breaths.

How to Practice:

- With one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, lie on your back.
- Focus on extending your belly rather than your chest when you take a deep breath through your nose.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth , letting your belly relax.
- Practice for 5–10 minutes daily for better respiratory efficiency.

2. Perform Pursed-Lip Breathing

Pursed-lip breathing helps slow down your breathing rate, improves airflow, and prevents air from getting trapped in your lungs. This technique is particularly useful during exercise or when feeling short of breath.

How to Practice:

- Breathe in through your nose slowly.
- Exhale gently via your mouth while keeping your lips pursed, as though extinguishing a light.

- Aim for a 1:2 inhale-to-exhale ratio, which means exhaling should take twice as long as inhaling.

3. Incorporate Rib Stretching

Rib stretching exercises expand your lung capacity by stretching your rib muscles and allowing your lungs to expand more. It also strengthens the muscles involved in breathing, making it easier to take deep breaths.

How to Practice:

- Exhale all the air from your lungs and stand up straight.
- Slowly inhale, expanding your ribs as much as possible.
- Hold your breath for 10–15 seconds, and then slowly exhale.
- Repeat this exercise 3–5 times for enhanced flexibility in your rib muscles.

4. Try the Humming Breath Technique

Humming while you exhale helps increase your nitric oxide levels, which improves oxygen transport in the body. This technique also promotes relaxation and reduces stress, both of which impact lung health.

How to Practice:

- Inhale deeply through your nose.
- While exhaling, make a humming sound for as long as you can.
- Repeat this for 5–10 breaths to increase oxygen levels and stimulate calmness.

5. Focus on Aerobic Exercises

Physical activity boosts your cardiovascular system and lung capacity. Aerobic exercises like walking, jogging, swimming, and cycling enhance your breathing efficiency by enhancing blood oxygen level.

Exercise Tips:

- Every week, try to get in at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise.

- To get your lungs ready for deeper breaths, begin with 5–10 minutes of warm-up breathing exercises.
- Increase the length and difficulty of your workouts gradually.

6. Use Interval Training for Breathing Control

Interval training involves short bursts of intense activity followed by recovery periods. It improves your breathing control, lung capacity, and endurance.

How to Practice:

- Alternate between 30 seconds of high-intensity activity (such as sprinting or jumping) and 30 seconds of rest.
- Repeat for 10–15 minutes.
- Start slowly and gradually increase the intensity over time.

7. Avoid Polluted Environments

Air pollution can significantly reduce lung function over time. If you live in a polluted area, take precautions to minimize exposure.

Tips to Protect Your Lungs:

- On days when pollution levels are high, use a mask.
- Avoid outdoor activities during peak pollution hours.
- Use air purifiers indoors to reduce indoor pollutants.

8. Prioritize Proper Hydration

Staying hydrated keeps your mucous membranes moist, which allows for smoother breathing. When you’re dehydrated, mucus thickens and obstructs your airways.

Hydration Tips:

- Every day, consume eight glasses or more of water.
- Steer clear of excessive alcohol and coffee as they can cause dehydration.
- Consider herbal teas that soothe the respiratory tract.

Myths and Facts About Lung Health

Myth: Lung capacity cannot change.

Fact: You can improve your lung capacity with regular breathing exercises and aerobic activities.

Myth: Holding your breath can damage your lungs.

Fact: Brief breath-holding exercises can improve lung function and increase oxygen retention over time.

Myth: Pollution only affects lungs outdoors.

Fact: The truth is that indoor air pollution can surpass that of outside air pollution. Protect your lungs indoors by using air purifiers.

Myth: Lung health is only a concern for smokers.

Fact: Non-smokers can experience lung issues from pollution, allergens, and sedentary lifestyles.

Myth: Shortness of breath always means poor lung health.

Fact: Various factors like stress, poor fitness, or temporary respiratory infections can cause shortness of breath. Always consult a doctor if it persists.

Did You Know?

- Humming while exhaling increases nitric oxide production, which aids in efficient oxygen delivery and reduces lung strain.
- Diaphragmatic breathing, when practiced consistently, can help reduce stress levels by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms your body.

11. Walking and Immune System Boost

Walking boosts your immune system by accelerating the circulation of white blood cells (WBCs) and antibodies through the bloodstream, enabling the body to detect and fight infections earlier. A brisk 20-30 minutes daily walk can reduce sick days by up to 43%.

How Walking Enhances Immunity: Immune Cell Circulation: Muscle contractions and a raised heart rate pump lymph (**which contains infection-fighting WBCs**) out of the lymph nodes and spleen, and into the bloodstream.

Reduced Stress Hormones: Regular moderate exercise lowers levels of cortisol and adrenaline, stress hormones that can suppress immune function.

Body Temperature: The temporary rise in body temperature during and immediately after a walk can inhibit bacterial growth and make the body more hostile to pathogens.

Natural Killer (NK) Cell Boost: Walking outdoors exposes you to sunlight (for Vitamin D) and nature, which has been shown to increase the number and activity of virus-fighting Natural Killer cells

Walking Dynamically Alters Your Immunity Accelerates Immune Surveillance: Walking gets your blood pumping, which rapidly redistributes critical pathogens-fighting cells—like Natural Killer (NK) cells and neutrophils—from your tissues into active blood circulation. This acts as an early warning system to find and clear infections faster.

Boosts Protective Antibodies: Regular aerobic movement stimulates the secretion of salivary IgA, an essential antibody coating your respiratory tract that acts as a front-line shield against viruses and bacteria.

Reduces Chronic Inflammation: While intense, exhausting exercises can temporarily spike stress hormones, low-to-moderate walking keeps cortisol and adrenaline low. This prevents the immune system from overreacting or burning out.

Flushes the Airways: The increased breathing rate during a steady walk helps mechanically flush potential bacteria out of your lungs and airways, reducing your risk of respiratory bugs.

Optimizing Your Walk for general immunological guidelines suggest aiming for 30 minutes of brisk walking on most days of the week. A "brisk" pace means you can still speak in full sentences, but you cannot easily sing. Taking your walks outdoors

into green spaces or forests offers an added advantage: exposure to natural sunlight triggers Vitamin D synthesis, which is vital for immune cell regulation.

Walking improves your immune system.

Peer-reviewed medical literature confirms that regular, moderate-intensity walking triggers immediate and long-term protective shifts in how your body defends itself against illness.

Scientific Evidence and Key Benefits Fewer Sick Days: A landmark study published by Harvard Health Publishing tracking over 1,000 adults found that those who walked at least 20 minutes a day, 5 days a week, had 43% fewer sick days than sedentary individuals. When they did get sick, their symptoms were significantly milder and lasted for a shorter duration.

Rapid Immune Cell Circulation: According to research logged in the Journal of Sport and Health Science, a single 20-to-30-minute session of brisk walking increases the recruitment and circulation of critical pathogen-fighting cells, specifically neutrophils and Natural Killer (NK) cells.

Better Delivery of Immune Defense: Walking causes your blood vessels to dilate and your heart rate to rise. This increased systemic circulation allows white blood cells to move through your body more rapidly, helping them detect and attack viruses or bacteria much earlier.

Anti-Inflammatory Effects: Chronic inflammation exhausts the immune system. Data from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) shows that regular aerobic exercise like walking lowers pro-inflammatory proteins (like IL-6 and TNF-α) while elevating anti-inflammatory components, allowing your immune defenses to work more efficiently.

Reduced Upper Respiratory Infections: Clinical reviews on PubMed indicate that regular walking improves general immune surveillance and lowers your risk of contracting upper respiratory illnesses, such as the common cold and the flu.

Optimal Walking Guidelines for Immune Health.

To maximize the immunological benefits of walking, researchers suggest following these specific parameters:

Parameter Recommended Target Research Justification Duration 30 to 45 minutes daily Sustains immune cell mobilization without overexerting the body.

Pace Brisk (2.5 to 4.0 mph) Moderate intensity is required to successfully alter immune cell profiles.

Frequency 5 days per week

Cumulative regular sessions yield long-term adaptive immunity. Unlike high-intensity exhaustive training, which can temporarily suppress immune function, low-to-moderate physical activity like walking provides an excellent, safe immunoregulatory balance across all age groups.

12. Walking and Brain Function

Walking boosts brain function by increasing blood flow, stimulating the hippocampus to enhance memory, and releasing mood-regulating chemicals like dopamine and serotonin. Just 20 to 30 minutes of daily walking can sharpen focus, reduce stress, and protect against long-term cognitive decline, delivering vital oxygen and nutrients, and releasing mood-enhancing chemicals like endorphins. Regular brisk walking strengthens the hippocampus, increases overall brain volume, and can lower the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

The brain-boosting benefits of walking include: Sharper Memory and Learning: Walking triggers the release of BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotropic Factor), which supports the growth of new brain cells and strengthens connections in the hippocampus—the area of the brain responsible for learning and memory

Enhanced Creativity: The rhythmic, repetitive motion of walking increases cerebral blood flow, which helps the brain break out of mental blocks and boosts creative thinking.

Reduced Stress and Anxiety: Walking calms the nervous system, helps manage stress responses, and has been shown to alleviate symptoms of depression by regulating neurotransmitters. Reversing Brain Aging: Research shows that consistent walking (e.g., briskly for just a few minutes a day, or up to 9,800 steps for older adults) expands brain volume in critical areas associated with reasoning and memory.

Improved Cognitive Performance: Short bursts of moderate-to-vigorous walking improve focus, processing speed, and executive function.

Outdoor Walking Bonus: Walking outdoors in natural environments provides an even greater cognitive boost, helping to clear mental strain and process thoughts more effectively.

Boosts Memory & Learning: Walking stimulates the hippocampus—the area of the brain vital for learning and retaining memories. Studies show that regular walking can even increase hippocampal volume and prevent age-related brain shrinkage.

Enhances Focus & Clarity: The foot’s impact during walking sends pressure waves through the arteries, boosting oxygen and nutrient delivery to the head. This improves attention, alertness, and working memory.

Improves Mood & Relieves Stress: A brisk walk naturally reduces the stress hormone cortisol while simultaneously triggering the production of endorphins, serotonin, and dopamine (the brain's "feel-good" chemicals).

Sparks Creativity: The rhythmic, steady motion of walking helps balance both brain hemispheres, unlocking subconscious thoughts and allowing you to break through creative and problem-solving slumps.

Promotes Neuroplasticity: Walking promotes neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to adapt, grow, and form new neural connections throughout your lifetime.

Lowers Dementia Risk: Consistent physical activity, such as walking for just 1 mile a day, significantly protects reasoning skills and lowers the risk of developing cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease.

New research suggests that just 12 minutes of social walking .New research suggests that just 12 minutes of social walking per day significantly boosts brain function. Transforming your health. On a macro level, the researchers found that people who did more exercise had better brain health. When they did less, 20 minutes of walking with a friend literally rewires your brain .That is why regular walking can improve recall and cognitive performance.

From a neuroscience and psychology view,

The Neurobiology of Strides Increased Cerebral Blood Flow: Foot impacts send pressure waves through arteries, directly increasing blood supply to the brain.

Oxygen and Nutrient Delivery: Enhanced circulation floods brain tissue with oxygen and essential nutrients for peak performance

Neurogenesis Activation: Cardiovascular movement triggers the growth of new neurons in vital brain regions.

Hippocampal Growth and Memory Retention Reversing Age-Related Shrinkage: Regular walking increases the physical size and volume of the hippocampus

Enhanced Declarative Memory: Aerobic walking directly improves the retention of facts, figures, and daily data. Long -Term Cognitive Reserve: Building brain volume early creates a buffer against late-stage cognitive decline.

The Neurochemistry of Mood and Focus : The "Feel-Good" Cocktail: Walking triggers the immediate release of dopamine, serotonin, and endorphins

Cortisol Regulation: Physical movement acts as a natural pressure valve to lower stress hormone levels.

Anxiety and Depression Mitigation: Consistent walking routines match the efficacy of mild clinical interventions for mood regulation

Cognitive Sharpness and Executive Function Sharper Working Memory: Walking enhances the brain's ability to hold and manipulate complex information. Elevated Attention Span: A brief walk resets neural fatigue, leading to higher focus upon return to tasks

Accelerated Processing Speed: Well-oxygenated neural pathways allow for quicker decision-making and problem-solving.

Unlocking Creative Problem-Solving Divergent Thinking Stimulation: The act of walking opens up non-linear thinking pathways, generating more unique ideas.

Bi-Hemispheric Integration: Alternating footsteps synchronize the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Breaking Mental Blocks: Changing environments and physical motion detach the mind from stagnant thought loops.

Neuroplasticity and Structural Adaptability BDNF Production: Walking elevates Brain-Derived Neurotropic Factor, the "miracle-gro" protein for neural connections.

Synaptic Strengthening: Regular movement reinforces the communication links between existing brain cells. Adaptive Rewiring: Physical activity helps the brain repair and reroute pathways after injury or chronic stress.

Shielding Against Neurodegeneration Alzheimer's Risk Reduction: Walking a few miles weekly significantly drops the risk of developing dementia. White Matter Protection: Aerobic walking preserves the structural integrity of the brain's communication wiring. Delayed Cognitive Aging: Active individuals show brain scans that look years younger than sedentary peers.

The 20-Minute Threshold: While a brief 5-minute walk clears immediate mental fog, your brain requires at least 20 consecutive minutes of movement to initiate long-term neurochemical changes and BDNF production.

Intensity Targets: To maximize brain benefits, walk at a moderate pace where your heart rate elevates, but you can still maintain a conversation. This specific intensity zone maximizes blood flow without triggering physical stress.

Environmental Synergy: Walking outdoors in natural, green settings amplifies stress reduction and mental recovery. In contrast, walking indoors on a treadmill or through complex urban environments requires more conscious navigation, slightly reducing the meditative benefits.

13. Walking and Stress Hormones.

Walking provides the best of both worlds. It offers the physical benefits of exercise while also boosting your emotional well-being. In fact, walking regularly can help ease symptoms related to chronic mental health conditions like anxiety and depression. You can walk anywhere without equipment or a special membership. The more you do it, the more positive effects you'll experience.

The Benefits of Walking

There are numerous benefits of walking. Some of the most common include.

- Improved sleep
- Better endurance
- Stress relief
- Improvement in mood
- Increased energy and stamina
- Reduced tiredness that can increase mental alertness
- Weight loss

Reduced cholesterol and improved cardiovascular (heart) health

Walking helps boost your mood because it increases blood flow and blood circulation to the brain and body. It has a positive influence on your hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which is your central nervous response system. This is good because the HPA axis is responsible for your stress response. When you exercise by walking, you calm your nerves, which can make you feel less stressed.

You can build on the positive effects of walking by inviting friends to join you. Walking with others for one or two days per week can have enormous benefits. Physical exercise combined with positive social interactions can improve negative moods, ward off depression, and improve self-esteem. Try to walk 3 days a week for 10-30 minutes at a time.

How to Create a Walking Routine

One of the best ways to begin a new walking routine is to start small and take it easy on yourself as you gradually build up endurance. Before you take a long walk, stretch to warm up. Start at a pace that feels relaxed, then build up to a brisk walk. Toward the end of your walk, give yourself time to slow down again.

Each time you go out, carve out a comfortable walking route, then extend your distance over the next few days or weeks. Give yourself goals to reach and celebrate your wins. Remember, it's not always about the length of your route. It's also about the quality of the walk and the benefits you get from doing it consistently.

A good rule of thumb is to walk for about 30-45 minutes, either all at once or broken into 10-minute chunks. This ends up being about 2-4 miles. You can measure your distance by wearing a watch to measure the time or buckling a pedometer to your belt to measure the distance. Here are some helpful tips to get you started:

Set yourself up for success. Start with a simple goal such as taking a 5-minute walk during your lunch break. When this becomes a routine, set a new goal like walking for 20 minutes after work. Find enough time during the day for your walks. With this plan, you could be setting goals that seemed impossible at the start.

Make walking enjoyable. If you don't like walking by yourself, you can ask a neighbor or a friend to join you. If your group energizes you, consider joining a walking group or a health club. You can try listening to music. This might make walking less boring.

Don't forget about comfort. You'll want to have comfortable shoes that won't hurt your feet if you're walking for long distances. It's helpful to give some thought to what you want to wear as well. Layers can help in unpredictable weather conditions. Water-repellent synthetic fabric can help keep you cool and dry if you work up a sweat.

Do it safely. If you're planning on walking at night, consider wearing brightly colored clothing and a reflector to help cars see you when they're passing by. Keep an eye on your surroundings, and always stay safe.

Switch up your routine. If you walk outdoors, you can plan a variety of different routes. If you're walking by yourself, tell someone which route you're taking for the day. Always walk in well-lit and safe locations.

Don’t worry about missed days. If you find yourself forgetting to go on your daily walks from time to time, don't give up. Get back on track by reminding yourself of how good you feel when you include physical activity in your daily routine.

Walking reduces stress by directly lowering negative stress hormones and boosting the production of feel-good neurochemicals. This low-intensity aerobic movement

regulates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which controls how your body processes and adapts to psychological strain.

Baseline reduction: Committing to regular, daily walks lowers your overall baseline cortisol levels over time. Adrenaline and Norepinephrine Adrenaline mitigation: Walking serves as a physical release for pent-up energy, calming acute adrenaline surges.

Norepinephrine balancing: Walking increases norepinephrine concentrations in brain regions responsible for managing your fight-or-flight response. Endorphins, Serotonin, and Dopamine Endorphin production: Brisk walking stimulates your brain to produce beta-endorphins, which act as natural mood elevators and pain reducers.

Neurotransmitter boost: Walking raises serotonin and dopamine levels, directly reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Optimization Strategies The "Nature Pill": Walking in green spaces or forests induces a 53% drop in cortisol, compared to just 37% when walking in urban environments.

Time target: According to research highlighted by Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience, a 20- to 30-minute walk yields the most efficient drop in cortisol. Weekly consistency: Aiming for a routine of 10 to 30 minutes, at least 3 days a week, max 5 days or more optimizes hormonal balance and nervous system resilience.

Walking reduces stress by directly lowering negative stress hormones and boosting the production of feel-good neurochemicals. This low-intensity aerobic movement regulates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, which controls how your body processes and adapts to psychological strain.

Cortisol (The Primary Stress Hormone) Immediate decline: Taking a walk helps to actively drop circulating cortisol levels in your bloodstream. Intensity threshold: Low-intensity movements like walking lower cortisol, unlike high-intensity workouts which trigger a temporary spikes in physical stress. Baseline reduction: Committing to regular, daily walks lowers your overall baseline cortisol levels over time.

Adrenaline and Norepinephrine Adrenaline mitigation: Walking serves as a physical release for pent-up energy, calming acute adrenaline surges. Norepinephrine balancing: Walking increases norepinephrine concentrations in brain regions responsible for managing your fight-or-flight response. Endorphins, Serotonin, and Dopamine Endorphin production: Brisk walking stimulates your brain to produce beta-endorphins, which act as natural mood elevators and pain reducers.

14. Walking and Sleep Quality

Walking is one of the simplest and most accessible forms of exercise, but its benefits extend far beyond physical fitness. Among the many advantages, walking can have a significant impact on the quality of your sleep. Whether you're someone who struggles with falling asleep or staying asleep, adding a daily walk to your routine may be the key to improving your sleep patterns. In this part , we'll explore the connection between walking and sleep, and why taking regular walks can enhance both the quantity and quality of your rest.

How Walking Impacts Sleep

Walking, like other forms of physical activity, plays a vital role in regulating sleep patterns. Here's how a daily walk can contribute to better sleep:

Reduces Stress and Anxiety

Stress and anxiety are among the most common culprits of poor sleep. When you're mentally overwhelmed or worried, it becomes difficult to relax enough to fall asleep. Walking, especially in natural settings, helps reduce levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and promotes the release of endorphins—your body's natural mood elevators. A brisk walk can help clear your mind, reduce anxiety, and improve your overall mood, making it easier to unwind when it's time to go to bed.

Boosts Physical Fatigue

One of the most straightforward ways walking improves sleep is by making you physically tired. Walking, especially at a moderate to brisk pace, engages multiple muscle groups, burns calories, and increases heart rate. By exerting energy throughout the day, your body naturally becomes more tired, making it easier to fall asleep quickly when you hit the pillow. People who lead a sedentary lifestyle often experience poor sleep because their bodies don't get enough physical activity to trigger a strong sleep drive. Walking helps solve this by promoting the physical fatigue necessary for restful sleep.

Regulates Circadian Rhythm

Your circadian rhythm, often referred to as your body's internal clock, regulates the sleep-wake cycle over a 24-hour period. Light exposure is one of the most important factors in maintaining a healthy circadian rhythm. Getting outside for a walk during daylight hours, especially in the morning, helps reinforce your body's natural rhythms by signaling when it's time to be awake and when it's time to

sleep. Morning walks in particular expose you to natural light, which tells your brain that it's time to be alert. This exposure helps align your sleep-wake cycle, making it easier to fall asleep at night and wake up feeling refreshed.

Reduces Symptoms of Insomnia

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder that makes it difficult to fall or stay asleep. Studies show that regular exercise, including walking, can reduce the severity of insomnia by improving sleep quality, increasing total sleep time, and reducing the time it takes to fall asleep In fact, a study published in the journal Sleep Health found that people who walked regularly reported improved sleep and less difficulty with insomnia compared to those who led a more sedentary lifestyle. Walking provides a non-pharmacological approach to improving sleep for people struggling with insomnia.

Promotes Mental Clarity and Relaxation

Walking provides an opportunity for mindfulness, which can help clear your mind and reduce racing thoughts before bed. Whether you prefer walking in a park, through your neighborhood, or on a quiet trail, the rhythmic motion and peaceful environment promote mental clarity and relaxation. Mindful walking—focusing on your steps, breathing, and surroundings—can help you release tension and calm the mind, making it easier to let go of the day's stress when bedtime arrives.

When Should You Walk to Maximize Sleep Benefits?

Timing matters when it comes to how walking affects your sleep. Here's how different times of day can impact your rest:

Morning Walks for Circadian Rhythm Support

Walking in the morning exposes your body to natural sunlight, which helps regulate your circadian rhythm. If you have trouble falling asleep at night, try to make morning walks a habit. The light exposure in the early hours helps reset your body’s internal clock, making it easier to sleep at night.

Afternoon Walks for Energy and Focus

An afternoon walk can help prevent the midday energy slump many people experience. It boosts energy levels and reduces feelings of fatigue, without interfering with your ability to fall asleep at night. If you prefer to walk later in the day, a moderate-paced walk can also be a great way to manage stress, especially after work.

Evening Walks for Relaxation

A walk in the early evening can help you unwind after a busy day. However, be cautious about walking too close to bedtime. While gentle walking can aid relaxation, vigorous exercise too close to bedtime may increase your heart rate and adrenaline, making it harder to fall asleep.

Aim to finish your walk at least 1-2 hours before bed to give your body enough time to wind down.

Tips for Incorporating Walking into Your Routine for Better Sleep

Here are some practical tips to help you make walking a regular part of your routine and reap the sleep benefits:

1. Start Small and Build Up

If you're new to walking or haven't been physically active in a while, start with shorter walks and gradually increase the duration. Even a 10-15 minute walk can have positive effects on your sleep. As you build endurance, aim for at least 30 minutes of walking most days of the week.

2. Choose Natural Settings When Possible

Walking in nature—such as parks, trails, or by the water—offers the added benefit of calming your mind and reducing stress. Research has shown that spending time in natural environments can help lower cortisol levels and improve overall well-being, making it a perfect setting for a relaxing walk.

3. Listen to Relaxing Music or a Podcast

If walking feels like a chore, make it enjoyable by listening to your favorite music or podcast. This can help distract your mind and make the walk more pleasant, allowing you to stick to the habit.

4. Stay Consistent

To truly experience the sleep benefits of walking, consistency is key. Try to make walking a part of your daily routine. Whether it's a morning stroll, an afternoon break, or an evening wind-down, make it a habit.

5. Pair Walking with a Relaxing Evening Routine

After an evening walk, continue your relaxation by following it up with a calming bedtime routine. Take a warm bath, read a book, or practice meditation to help

your body transition into sleep mode. So, lace up your shoes, step outside, and let a simple walk be your gateway to a better night's sleep!

If you or someone you love are continuing to have sleeping trouble that may be a sign of an underlying problem. Please click the orange button below to take a free online sleep test and talk with one of our sleep health professionals. Exercising too close to bedtime can lower sleep quality and make it harder to fall asleep. Restorative yoga, tai chi, or slow walking are good exercises to do before bed. Wait one to two hours after moderate or vigorous exercise before going to sleep for the best rest. Exercising before bed can negatively impact your sleep quality, making it harder to fall asleep.

Advantages of Exercise Before Bed

Daily exercise provides numerous benefits, including better sleep quality.

While it's best to avoid intense activities like running, cycling, or swimming laps before bed, engaging in lighter activities such as walking or stretching is beneficial.

Mild exercise before bed can have positive effects on your health, such as

Better blood sugar regulation

Better digestion

Decreased muscle tension

Relaxation

Downsides of Exercise Before Bed

The nervous system naturally switches between active and calm. When it is active, it is primed to face challenges and engage in physical activities such as competitive sports. Sleep occurs when the nervous system is in the resting state. Revving up the nervous system before bed can interfere with sleep. Exercise can affect your body temperature, which might lead to sleep challenges. Normally, your body temperature drops as you get ready for sleep. Exercising before bed can raise your core temperature and disrupt this natural process.

Moderate or vigorous exercise too close to bedtime can:

- Decrease sleep quality
- Make it more difficult to fall asleep
- Lead to more nighttime awakenings

Intense nighttime exercise increases heart rate and adrenaline levels, making it harder to fall asleep. Pay attention to how your body responds to exercise. If you must exercise late in the day, try calming activities like stretching or meditation to help you relax before bed.

Which Types of Exercise Are Best Before Bed

Your heart rate and breathing will indicate that the activity is calming and not stimulating. Pre-bedtime activities should not be vigorous or engaging enough to make the body and mind more alert. Some options for exercises to calm your body and mind before bed include

Restorative yoga: Yoga nidra and other low-intensity yoga can help promote sleep. More intense forms of yoga, such as vinyasa (flow), should be done earlier in the day.

Tai chi: This ancient Chinese practice incorporates slow, gentle movements and focusing on breathing to promote peace and relaxation.

Slow walking: Walking at a leisurely pace can help you unwind and relax before bed.

Exercises to Minimize Before Bed

Moderate- to high-intensity workouts before bed—those that increase your breathing and heart rate—can disrupt your sleep. If you struggle to fall asleep or get restful sleep, try to reduce the intensity of certain exercises or avoid them one to two hours before going to bed. Examples of moderate to vigorous exercises include:

- Biking
- Brisk walking
- Cycling
- Dancing
- Gardening or heavy yard work
- Running
- Swimming laps
- Tennis
- Tips for Working Out at Night

Sometimes, exercising later in the day is the only reasonable time to fit physical activity into your day. If this is the case, exercise closer to bedtime is better than no physical activity at all, but there are ways to lessen its impact on sleep, including:

Do more intense exercises at the beginning of the workout.

End the workout with a cool down, such as walking or stretching.

Do something that relaxes the body and mind after working out and before bed.

Be aware of how your workout schedule impacts your sleep, and adjust as necessary.

How Long to Wait to Sleep After Working Out?

If you want a restful and uninterrupted sleep, experts recommend waiting one to two hours after a moderate or vigorous workout to go to bed .Light physical activity, such as walking, can be done up to an hour before bed. However, it is best to exercise in the morning or afternoon.

Frequent movement boosts sleep quality and next-day energy. Consistency beats intensity.

Even short daily movement helps

Participants who engaged in exercise more regularly experienced deeper, more restorative sleep. “That’s exactly what you want,” Baird said. Interestingly, just 10 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day was sufficient to produce noticeable benefits in the young adult participants. The researchers described moderate to vigorous activity as any movement that increases breathing but still permits conversation—roughly a 6 on a 1-to-10 exertion scale. Even lighter physical activity, like routine walking or taking standing breaks, was associated with improved sleep quality and a better mood the following day.

More movement, better mood

Participants who exercised more frequently also said they felt more energetic and experienced lower stress levels. “We saw that more non-REM sleep was tied to better next-day mood and energy,” Baird said. While both scientific research and everyday experience have long supported the idea that regular physical activity improves sleep—and that better sleep enhances overall well-being—most previous studies were conducted in lab settings and focused on short-term outcomes, often just after a single night , What sets this study apart is its innovative use of wearable technology. By comparing participants’ activity and sleep patterns continuously over months, researchers gain a much more comprehensive understanding of how daily habits influence sleep and mood over time.

Rethinking public health guidelines

Corral emphasized that while current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization recommend 150 minutes of exercise per week, they don’t specify how to spread out that time. “Our results suggest that daily movement may be better for sleep than doing it all on the weekend,” he said.

If future research confirms these findings in broader populations — including people of varying ages and activity levels — they could lead to updates in public health recommendations. “Current guidelines don’t reflect the importance of frequency for sleep health,” Baird said. “Having this kind of data allows us to start thinking about whether they should.”

Beyond sleep, the implications are wide-reaching. “Sleep is when your brain stores memories, clears waste, and resets,” Corral explained. “Better sleep means better brain health and potentially lower risks of chronic disease and depression.” Ultimately, the takeaway is simple: Daily movement — even in small doses — can make a big difference. “You don’t need to run marathons,” Corral said. “Just moving a little each day helps. Light activity counts too. Doing something is better than doing nothing.”

Conclusion

Walking is a powerful, low-impact exercise that offers numerous benefits for sleep. From reducing stress and anxiety to improving mood and regulating the circadian rhythm, walking plays a key role in enhancing sleep quality and overall health. Whether you're looking to fall asleep faster, sleep more deeply, or wake up feeling refreshed, incorporating regular walks into your routine can make a significant difference.

15. Walking and Hormonal Balance

When your hormones feel out of sync, everything can feel off. Mood swings, stubborn weight gain, sleep disruptions, anxiety, hot flashes—it's not just frustrating, it's exhausting. For many women navigating their 40s and 50s, these symptoms are often dismissed as "just part of aging." But that doesn't mean you have to suffer through them. What if one of the most powerful tools for hormonal balance wasn't in a pill bottle or gym membership... but right outside your front door. The hormone-balancing power of nature walks. As women move through peri -menopause and menopause, key hormones begin to fluctuate and eventually decline:

- Estrogen affects mood, temperature regulation, memory, and fat distribution
- Progesterone supports sleep, calmness, and cycle regularity
- Cortisol (your stress hormone) can become elevated and disrupt everything else
- Insulin may become less efficient, leading to blood sugar spikes and fatigue

When these hormones are imbalanced, your body and mind feel it—physically, emotionally, and mentally. While nutrition and sleep play a huge role in rebalancing, movement and mindful time in nature is an often-overlooked key .Let's dive into how something as simple as a daily walk in nature can help reset your system and bring those hormones back into alignment.

Nature Walks Lower Cortisol (Your Stress Hormone)

Chronic stress is one of the fastest ways to throw your hormones out of whack. Elevated cortisol levels can lead to belly fat, anxiety, sleep issues, and blood sugar problems—all common complaints during peri-menopause. Research shows that walking in natural settings significantly lowers cortisol levels, compared to walking in urban or indoor environments. Just 20 to 30 minutes in a green space can noticeably lower your stress response. Lower cortisol also means better balance between estrogen, progesterone, and insulin.

They Support Better Sleep and Melatonin Regulation , Many midlife women struggle with falling asleep or staying asleep, thanks in part to declining progesterone and disrupted melatonin rhythms. Nature can help. Exposure to natural daylight—especially early in the day—resets your circadian rhythm and boosts melatonin production at night. A brisk morning walk outside tells your brain it's time to be alert now and prepares it to wind down later.

Consistent sleep supports better hormone production and helps regulate hunger hormones like leptin and ghrelin, which influence your weight, cravings, and energy levels.

Walking Improves Insulin Sensitivity

Insulin resistance often becomes more common during midlife, leading to increased belly fat, brain fog, and cravings. One of the simplest ways to improve insulin sensitivity is regular, moderate-intensity walking—especially after meals. A study in Diabetes Care found that even 10-minute walks after eating significantly reduced blood sugar spikes. Add fresh air and nature into the mix, and the benefits multiply. Less insulin resistance means fewer energy crashes, easier weight management, and better hormonal flow overall. It Boosts Dopamine and Serotonin (Your Feel-Good Neurochemicals)

Hormonal shifts don't just affect your body—they deeply impact your emotional well-being. Low estrogen can reduce serotonin and dopamine, making you feels low, irritable, or emotionally flat. Nature walks help elevate these feel-good brain chemicals naturally. Walking among trees, birds, and natural sounds increases dopamine (motivation and pleasure) and serotonin (mood and calmness)—without side effects. This mood lift also helps reduce cravings, emotional eating, and those anxious racing thoughts that disrupt hormone recovery.

Grounding with Nature Regulates the Nervous System

Walking barefoot on grass, sitting near a tree, or simply noticing birdsong and wind through the trees might sound poetic, but it's actually a therapeutic process called grounding or earthing.

Studies show that grounding can reduce inflammation, balance cortisol rhythms, and improve immune function—all of which contribute to hormonal harmony. Time spent in nature helps shift your body out of fight-or-flight mode and into rest-and-repair. And when your nervous system calms, your hormones get the space they need to reset.

Nature Walks Increase Estrogen Sensitivity

While estrogen levels naturally decline with age, how sensitive your body is to estrogen also matters. Lifestyle factors like stress, poor diet, and inactivity can make estrogen less effective, even if your levels are technically "normal." Moderate movement in a low-stress environment—like nature—has been shown to increase estrogen receptor sensitivity, meaning your body gets more benefit from the estrogen you do have. This can improve mood, skin health, brain clarity, and

metabolism during perimenopause and beyond. They Encourage Mindful Movement, Not Intensity Overload .

A common mistake midlife women make is pushing too hard with intense workouts that raise cortisol even more. While strength training and cardio have their place, balance is key. Nature walks offer a gentler, more sustainable way to stay active without overwhelming your already taxed system. They don't spike stress hormones like high-intensity interval training might. Instead, they support recovery, hormone recalibration, and nervous system regulation.

How to Make Your Walks Work for Your Hormones

Here are a few simple strategies to get the most hormone support from your nature walks:

- Walk in the morning light to reset your circadian rhythm and improve sleep
- Leave the headphones behind sometimes to let your brain relax
- Breathe deeply and focus on your surroundings to reduce cortisol
- Aim for 20 to 30 minutes daily in a park, forest, or natural area
- Add in light strength movements like squats or stretches along the way for bonus benefits
- If you can't get to a forest or trail, even a tree-lined street, lake path, or quiet garden counts.

Nature Is One of Your Best Midlife Allies, You don't need more restriction, hustle, or stress to feel better in midlife. You need more support. More regulation , More nourishment.

A simple daily walk in nature offers all of that—and more.

- It grounds your nervous system
- Lowers your stress load
- Boosts happy brain chemicals
- Improves your sleep and metabolism
- And gives your hormones the space they need to find their new rhythm.
- Understand what your hormones are actually trying to tell you
- Use movement (like walking, stretching, and strength training) to support balance
- Fuel your body without restriction
- Sleep better, feel calmer, and gain energy you forgot you had
- Finally release the weight that's been stuck—physically and emotionally

You don’t have to do this alone, and you don’t have to fight your body to feel better. Because the weight isn’t just on your body—it’s on your mind, your heart, your confidence. And that weight is over.

Does Walking Help Balance Hormones?

Hormonal balance involves the endocrine system regulating various bodily functions through chemical messengers. These hormones govern metabolism, stress response, mood, and reproduction. The system is highly responsive to lifestyle factors, and simple, low-impact movement like walking is increasingly recognized for its regulatory effects. Walking offers an accessible way to influence the body’s internal chemistry, promoting equilibrium without the intensity of strenuous exercise. This exploration details the specific ways walking interacts with the endocrine system, supporting overall hormonal health.

Walking’s Immediate Impact on Stress and Metabolism.

Walking immediately modulates the body’s stress response. The chronic release of cortisol can be mitigated by engaging in moderate activity. Regular movement helps the body manage this substance, preventing it from remaining chronically elevated. A walk of around 20 to 30 minutes reduces circulating levels of stress hormones, preventing the effects of prolonged tension.

Muscular movement improves metabolic function by addressing how cells handle glucose. Walking enhances cellular sensitivity to insulin, the hormone responsible for ushering sugar into cells. During and immediately after a walk, activated muscle groups consume glucose directly for energy, a process that is independent of insulin. This increased uptake stabilizes blood sugar levels quickly, supporting metabolic health.

Even a short walk taken 15 to 30 minutes after a meal significantly reduces the usual spike in postprandial glucose. This lowers the demand placed on the pancreas to produce a large surge of insulin. This single session of activity improves muscle insulin sensitivity, an effect that can persist for several hours. Consistent walking helps prevent the reduced insulin sensitivity that often accompanies a sedentary lifestyle.

Systemic Effects on Mood and Reproductive Hormones

Beyond immediate metabolic and stress responses, walking triggers the release of chemicals that enhance psychological well-being. The activity stimulates the production of endorphins, which reduce the perception of pain and anxiety. This release contributes to improved mood during and after a walk. Regular walking also increases concentrations of norepinephrine, a chemical that modulates the brain’s

response to stress, stabilizing mental state. This reduction in stress and anxiety, coupled with mood-lifting effects, supports systemic hormonal balance. The improved psychological state reduces the burden of chronic stress on the endocrine system. Long-term, this creates an environment conducive to the optimal function of other hormonal pathways.

The indirect influence of walking extends to reproductive and aging hormones. While walking does not directly stimulate the production of these hormones, it supports their optimal levels through improved body composition. Excess visceral fat disrupts the balance of sex hormones. By managing weight and reducing body fat, walking assists in maintaining healthier levels of these hormones as people age. Regular activity, particularly interval walking, may also contribute to maintaining better testosterone levels and stimulating growth hormone release.

Determining the Right Walking Routine for Hormone Health

When establishing a walking routine for hormonal support, consistency is more impactful than high-intensity exertion. Regularity ensures the body receives continuous signals for stress reduction and metabolic management. Aiming for a sustainable routine will yield better long-term results than sporadic, exhausting workouts.

General health guidelines recommend a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. This target is achieved by walking for approximately 30 minutes on five days. Avoid going more than two consecutive days without activity to maintain momentum in improved insulin sensitivity.

The pace of the walk can be customized to target specific hormonal goals. A gentle, restorative stroll is highly effective for reducing immediate psychological stress and promoting the calming effects of movement. Conversely, a brisk walking pace, where the heart rate is elevated and conversation is slightly challenging, is more beneficial for improving metabolic health and increasing cellular insulin sensitivity. Alternating between a brisk pace and a slower stroll, such as in interval walking, can maximize both metabolic and mood benefits.

16. Walking and Longevity.

Walking is one of the most powerful and underrated habits for increasing longevity. Just 15 minutes of brisk walking a day can reduce all-cause mortality by nearly 20%. It preserves muscle, supports cardiovascular health, and regulates metabolic capacity, making it a key element in living a longer, healthier life. The connection between walking and longevity relies on a strong, dose-dependent relationship where moving more directly extends your lifespan.

The Lifespan Numbers Step Sweet Spot: Walking between 7,000 and 10,000 steps per day reduces the risk of premature, all-cause mortality by 39% to 47%.The Minimum Threshold: Longevity benefits begin at just 2,200 steps per day, meaning even short distances combat the risks of a sedentary lifestyle.

Added Years: Transitioning from inactive to highly active via walking can add 5 to 11 years to your life expectancy. Every single hour of walking can add roughly 3 to 6 hours to your lifespan. Why Walking Extends Life Cardiovascular Efficiency: It lowers blood pressure, reduces bad cholesterol, and improves cardiac output, driving down heart disease—the leading global cause of death.

Disease Prevention: Regular walking reduces the incidence of type 2 diabetes by 14%, dementia by 38%, and certain cancer mortalities by 37%.Cellular Anti-Aging: Low-intensity walking activates cellular repair pathways, manages hormonal declines (like testosterone and estrogen), and minimizes oxidative stress.

Pace vs. Duration Total Volume Matters Most: Studies show that the overall number of steps you take is more critical for longevity than how fast you take them. The Power of Briskness: However, if you pick up the pace, walking fast for just 15 minutes a day can cut total mortality risks by nearly 20%.

IGF-1 Regulation (Insulin-like Growth Factor 1 Regulation) : Aging typically lowers IGF-1 levels, increasing disease risk. Physical activity can activate the IGF-1 pathway to improve muscle, metabolism, and brain health, though human studies on walking specifically remain inconclusive.

Sex Hormones: Aging reduces testosterone in men (causing muscle loss and fat gain) and estrogen in women (affecting bone mass). Exercise helps reverse this; adding 1,000 steps daily can raise testosterone by 7 ng/dL, while structured workouts improve postmenopausal estrogen. Combined Lifestyle approach: Pairing physical activity with optimal nutrition (like functional foods) boosts exercise performance, builds muscle strength, and protects against age-related frailty better than doing either alone.

Cellular Impact: Preclinical rodent studies show that exercise targets multiple molecular hallmarks of aging, though more direct human research is needed to confirm how low-intensity walking specifically drives these cellular benefits.

Regular, brisk walking for 30 minutes, five days a week, significantly reduces the risk of age-related diseases like cardiovascular, cognitive, and metabolic disorders, while enhancing longevity. This low-intensity exercise mirrors the daily lifestyles of populations in Blue Zones, with proven benefits to circulatory, cardiopulmonary, and molecular anti-aging mechanisms. Walking for a certain number of minutes at a brisk pace may extend your lifespan, according to one study. Scientists estimate that if everyone walked for 160 minutes every day, they could increase their life expectancy by up to 11 years, depending on how active they were before. The benefits lie in the ways that walking can improve your cardiovascular, metabolic, and mental health.

From a sunnier mood and less stress to a healthier heart and stronger bones, the benefits of walking are plentiful. Now, researchers have uncovered another potential benefit of taking a daily stroll: Walking adds years to life, provided that you're walking for enough minutes and at a brisk enough pace.

By comparing the most active participants to the least, researchers found that the more physically active participants tended to have the highest life expectancy. More specifically, they found that 25% of the most active people in the study walked 160 minutes daily at 3 mph (which would be considered an average-to-brisk walking speed, depending on your age). Based on this, researchers estimated that if all people boosted their activity to this level, they could increase their life expectancy from 78.6 to 84 years—an increase of over five years.

However, being in the lowest 25% of activity was associated with a decrease in life expectancy of around six years. Still, if these less-active individuals logged an additional 111 minutes of walking each day, they could conceivably experience even greater benefits, living nearly 11 years longer.

Adults who walk for longer periods, which researchers defined as longer than 10 minutes, had substantially lower risks of cardiovascular disease and premature death when compared to those participants who walk for shorter periods, “Most studies focus on the total number of daily steps (including our previous studies), but ours shows that how you accumulate those steps matters too — especially for less active individuals. “This adds nuance to the ‘10,000 steps a day’ idea: even if you don’t reach that number, taking a few longer walks rather than many short, scattered steps can make a real difference for heart health and longevity.”

Nearly 31% of the world’s adult population are physically inactive and do not meet the global recommendation of getting at least 150 minutes of exercise per week.

Sedentary lifestyles are linked to a higher risk of insomnia, mortality and cardiovascular disease.

"Everyone can benefit from walking — there's really no group for whom walking is harmful. But these particular findings are most relevant for people who are sedentary or take fewer than about 8,000 steps a day. **There are no shortcuts to health.**

Building the capacity to walk for longer periods of time can help improve cardiovascular health and heart strength, Building the capacity to walk for longer periods of time can help improve cardiovascular health and heart strength .

"Most people can walk for a minute or two or five without much issue. But when you start getting to … 20 and 30 and 40 and 60 minutes in, it becomes a lot harder for folks, and that's the capacity we're really trying to build,Regular exercise trains your muscles to pull oxygen from your blood, which reduces heart rate, inflammation and stress."Longer walks likely help by improving blood circulation, lowering blood pressure, and supporting glucose control — all key for heart health. They also may increase the volume of heart stimulation, which may be needed to fully activate and engage your muscles, he added.

But like most muscles in your body, exercising for longer periods isn't something that you can do immediately. You can think about taking a longer walk like lifting a 100-pound (45-kilogram) dumbbell, said Freeman. "I couldn't just go over and do it from the get-go. I'd have to build up the capacity, build up the muscle strength to get there. And the same thing is true for cardiac strength and cardio."

So often we hear people tell us to reach a certain goal: 10,000 steps per day or 150 minutes of exercise per week. But that can be difficult to keep track of and overwhelming, especially for people who don't live a particularly active lifestyle. That's why this study focuses on duration, or how long you walk.

"Pace still matters, but duration and consistency of walking bouts seem to be powerful factors. So, instead of counting every single step, people might focus on carving out short sessions of continuous walking during their day.

Consistency is key. Incorporating simple exercises, like walking, into your daily routine will build stamina and increase physical capacity

The easiest method is walking, and following good walking form by standing tall with your shoulders back and swinging your arms, which can help prevent backaches, make it easy to breath and keep you balanced. "Walking is a full body movement. It is not just about your lower body. For people just starting out, you can increase duration of walks by parking farther away from your usual spot or

engaging in "cozy cardio." "The goal still is roughly 30 minutes a day of breathless physical activity, which is an intense level for most folks," Freeman said.

Breathless physical activity is like if you're walking briskly and you can talk, but you can't sing.

Other exercises that are good for heart health include wall sits and planks, or aerobic movement, like biking. Building the capacity for longer movement is key because it "takes cardiac reserve, cardiac strength, and, of course, physical strength. And those together are pretty amazing preventatives when it comes to all sorts of heart disease, including coronary disease and high blood pressure. Participants were relatively inactive, which was defined as walking less than 8,000 steps per day, and the study excluded people who already had major illnesses to reduce bias. Researchers used accelerometers to track movement and activity was only measured once during that week, so potential changes in walking habit were not tracked.

Conclusion.

Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways to live a longer, healthier life. By adding just 30 minutes of daily walking to your routine, you can protect your heart, balance your hormones, and lower your risk of chronic diseases. Combined with good nutrition, this simple habit keeps your body functioning at its best as you age.

WALKING BENEFITS BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.Walking and Fat loss
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/walking-for-good-health
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/walking-tips
2. Walking and Obesity Prevention
https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/obesity/preventing-obesity
https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/walking-for-weight-loss
3. Walking and Diabetes Control
https://www.diabetes.org.uk/living-with-diabetes/exercise/walking-with-diabetes
4. Walking and Heart Health
https://upmc.ie/blog/heart-health/walking-and-heart-health
https://heart.arizona.edu/heart-health/prevention/10-things-you-can-do-today-preventreverse-heart-disease
5. Walking and Blood Pressure Regulation
https://www.eatingwell.com/article/8038473/walking-plan-to-lower-blood-pressure/#:~:text=A%20January%202022%20meta%2Danalysis%20in%20the%20journal,months)%20lowered%20blood%20pressure%20by%204/2%20mmHg.
6. Walking and Cholesterol Management
https://www.healthcentral.com/condition/high-cholesterol
https://www.healthcentral.com/condition/high-cholesterol/walk-this-way-to-lower-your-cholesterol
7. Walking and Cancer Prevention
https://www.cancercenter.com/community/blog/2025/04/does-walking-reduce-cancer-risk
8. Walking and Bone Strength
https://www.reboundmd.com/news/benefits-walking-bone-health
https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/bone-health/art-20045060
9. Walking and Joint Health
https://www.arthritis.org/health-wellness/healthy-living/physical-activity/walking/12-benefits-of-walking
https://getwalking.org/articles/walking-for-joint-health.html
10. Walking and Lung Capacity
https://www.google.com/search?q=does+Walking+improves+Lung+Capacity+brisk&num=10&sca_esv=07b6421d581a57bc&rlz=1C1VDKB_enIN1117IN1117&sxsrf=AE3TifNMa3mOhtygjt6RfWilR4ZiiqF6gw%3A1767798527174&ei=_3ZeaZevCuqovr0P9Kn9qAg&ved=0ahUKEwjXqvzZ2vmRAxVqlK8BHfRUH4UQ4dUDCBE&uact=5&oq=does+Walking+improves+Lung+Capacity+brisk&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiKWRvZXMgV2Fsa2luZyBpbXByb3ZlcyBMdW5nIENhcGFjaXR5IGJyaXNrMgYQABgWGB4yCxAAGIAEGIoFGIYDMgsQABiABBiKBRiGAzIFEAAY7wUyCBAAGIAEGKIEMgUQABjvBTIIEAAYgAQYogRIlCpQ2gtYxxxwAXgAkAEAmAHCAaAB2wiqAQMwLje4AQPIAQD4AQGYAgegAuEHwgIKEAAYRxjWBBiwA8ICCBAAGIkFGKIEmAMAiAYBkAYIkgcFMS41LjGgB98qsgcFMC41LjG4B9kHwgcFMi01LjLIBzWACAE&sclient=gws-wiz-serp
https://www.narayanahealth.org/blog/tips-to-improve-lung-capacity-and-breathing-efficiency
https://continentalhospitals.com/blog/how-30-minutes-of-brisk-walking-can-transform-your-health/
11. Walking and Immune System Boost
https://www.google.com/search?num=10&sca_esv=07b6421d581a57bc&rlz=1C1VDKB_enIN1117IN1117&sxsrf=AE3TifOv82JRBs5q_jzY8_QDvsYSnUqnog:1767799606321&q=How+does+walking+boost+immune+system&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPlcbc3vmRAxVZmq8BHW8XGIAQ1QJ6BAg_EAE&biw=1366&bih=607&dpr=1
https://www.google.com/search?q=Does+walking+improves+immune+system+PROER+ARTICLES&authuser=0&aep=21&udm=50&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=aim_aware&utm_content=oo-seaport-11596&mstk=AUtExfApVZHmENMlkIPTUJxQDWeTGnL_3bdPpsubErAYhlhvLVPsesLIbAgn6Axjq_xdDtyxti9NXwN1r3VJo3L838t0UiZdcbpoV2iIBOYBpL8KqSoLwuKoV6QmIqJ1PhJkq6dKsUiH9iYfrH5r8csB4nM_2BSzBXkeaHLzM-gk-mPPi2UtnW31qusrGZsjaeATX8n-6tkEzstkkFiw82c4nr1O8fzuBGiCCJR6DFE1i-WTfkHkZnWtYQ3Af5mOWOoskTIkZbXLp76Roh634bVDW73NefRcSu-DnVkijuo81dQuoYkcJSvv0yrJYgY5SFyViuwU-bBfENRaLxICtwoDV6Vg1VFTt0Fd9QJpjhM56ETpGM9tqpnQdoJ3vaV6sn2-UNUMATj1__Isy4Nmtaovpc2o2nRY4bILqnOlguGrKfYR6b4-KuLKzBQNhqrSpo_SJAdFU7kYA-lK46BU7Gc0vwrgiP7lZtT0&csuir=1&mtid=kwYgavqWE4fcseMP7c6syQo
12. Walking and Brain Function
https://www.google.com/search?q=Walking+effect+on+brain&num=10&sca_esv=bb60679124c5811c&rlz=1C1VDKB_enIN1117IN1117&biw=1366&bih=607&sxsrf=AE3TifOL1L5BfRHM5H0MeRcMNxb7oNCIhQ%3A1767804276188&ei=dI1eafWgC4fBvr0Poo_ToQs&ved=0ahUKEwj1qqiP8PmRAxWHo

K8BHaLHNLQQ4dUDCBE&oq=Walking+effect+on+brain&gs_lp=Egxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlcnAiF1dhbGtpbmcgZWZmZWN0IG9uIGJyYWluMgoQABhHGNYEGLADMgoQABhHGNYEGLADMgoQABhHGNYEGLADMgoQABhHGNYEGLADMgoQABhHGNYEGLADMgoQABhHGNYEGLADSNYOUABYAHABeAGQAQCYAQCgAQCqAQC4AQzIAQCYAgGgAgaYAwCIBgGQBgiSBwExoAcAsgcAuAcAwgcDMi0xyAcEgAgB&sclient=gws-wiz-serp
https://www.google.com/search?q=12.+Walking+and+Brain+Function+give+me+headpoints&rlz=1C1OZZY_enIN1208IN1208&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQABjvBTIKCAIQABiABBiiBDIHCAMQABjvBTIKCAQQABiABBiiBDIKCAUQABiABBiiBNIBCjEwODE0ajBqMTWoAgiwAgHxBXxqS5wuq9N9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&udm=50&fbs=ADc_l-aN0CWEZBOHjofHoaMMDiKpaEWjvZ2Py1XXV8d8KvlI3o6iwGk6Iv1tRbZIBNIVs-6YKj3ieLLpE5n_AQ7knvnyHmq2hxoqmS0Tx38rbtTMov-wa-bLFI7bo4Svk_fQcOdhqaQZjGtjAaayhJ9Aoac_LUYnO6tJXCSu5koJJlJ33fr2NYSbKOnvY8Dtv_B6gr_h5MfYaOOk1cF_T9ENo458F_EoiA&aep=10&ntc=1&mstk=AUtExfDpzz0lb1_2hwAcY9oZ6UNb3U4jfxk4kZSbiyO2o89hjl9wkJqfMoKVTsH65h8LlJT8jl-K3VTYZbd2xTsYCzily6ss25Gq4fq-DS9rN4hqIVpHGP4J5L1AJ8zUcb2NY_sPXy0Menea1e8wJH5Pn9AecJqxMMkTZDWrfjROgBAPwfBi3VOdffeD1g7VWx3V8_58SJkMUnI_yrUeIotwjD9cUz4lbmoKgT82LIiZS6EIu-159hsE8iAOWfPSYgQdBWWBHuziOwIowAu6iWbudZ4mmX7SD9h0omPqL8m9R4GuXEtPCqqKjCfwg1lM0xyKpFcKYPuQyDbIIXtvQaOgSEVckl_1MM9VYlEeHhPuSsF86QVN2jyJbkCF5Ejs683IAh2AYFOZ42vbbAn6Vsh-TCZBfHGE74AqnhdZRd3LTaHQY8AEPNd8LMPyFdUaIYZXQQrO7n9V52GgXBKAAio_BmLqJ8glDaG8&aioh=3&csuir=1&cs=1&mtid=HQ4gaumfO6u6seMPnOC32Ao

13. Walking and Stress Hormones

https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/mental-benefits-of-walking
https://www.google.com/search?q=effects+of+Walking+on+stress+hormones&sca_esv=8512dc6a21388a36&rlz=1C1VDKB_enIN1117IN1117&biw=1366&bih=607&aic=0&ei=YGhiafbBGf7Hvr0PnY3OsAI&ved=2ahUKEwiQ07C6nYGSAxVt7jgGHciQBlMQ0NsOegQIAxAB&uact=5&sclient=gws-wiz-serp&udm=50&fbs=ADc_l-aN0CWEZBOHjofHoaMMDiKpaEWjvZ2Py1XXV8d8KvlI3vxYI1tojT_24H7Q4iMwclQvV5D9BlBw55EmBElwpyk3vkCRvRKYb73Oznzx1ULLqT-gD9E3hk7T1a7F0N2RJt7hihIb97TW2UNPsW3DtatmvwJOgKnYBI2XG67hXi9DvSfvcD038tYlfcOk3-Ifgm1XNLFZxTu-SHliCNJRnxoQDW7TOA&aep=10&ntc=1&mstk=AUtExfDyDld7u1_lHhSUyW8Wpq4HjcslZ77fl35uWy8cxU5GSJsHesnRfCxE8nT4RHYs0aomV-Lr2KtYSiChoSaGL8ifYLBf6I_pI2BxyMYPLH-bl_2hE8efoEuaKRpi4PJsKiScTIaFjjXdp_Uf00AjZV-CkCS3-bjTO4w&csuir=1
https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=8512dc6a21388a36&rlz=1C1VDKB_enIN1117IN1117&q=Anxiety+walking+in+public&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiGiITcn4GSAxWfS2cHHRzYFvgQ1QJ6BAhUEAE&biw=1366&bih=607&dpr=1&aic=0

14. Walking and Sleep Quality

https://www.verywellhealth.com/walking-for-better-sleep-11806283
https://info.ancsleep.com/blog/how-walking-can-improve-your-sleep-the-power-of-a-daily-stroll
https://scitechdaily.com/a-10-minute-daily-walk-could-be-the-secret-to-better-sleep/

15. Walking and Hormonal Balance

https://biologyinsights.com/does-walking-help-balance-hormones/
https://www.fitnessinspirationforwomen.com/blog/How-Nature-Walks-Can-Help-You-Rebalance-Hormones-Backed-by-Science

16. Walking and Longevity

https://www.prevention.com/health/a69930051/walking-adds-up-to-11-years-to-life-study/
https://edition.cnn.com/2025/10/27/health/walking-long-benefits-study-wellness
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10643563/

Medifit Education's

WALKING MEDICAL BENEFITS

Motion as Medicine: The Natural, Slow-Paced Prescription

ISBN - 978-81-988894-8-2

This comprehensive text serves as an authoritative guide to the systemic, evidence-based therapeutic benefits of daily ambulation, bridding the gap between simple movement and clinical health outcomes. By systematically analyzing the physiological impact of walking across sixteen dedicated chapters, the book illustrates how consistent pacing optimizes metabolic regulation—specifically targeting adipose reduction, obesity mitigation, and precise glycemic control for diabetes management.

It moves beyond superficial fitness advice to detail the exact biomechanical and biochemical mechanisms that lower blood pressure, optimize lipid profiles, and fortify cardiovascular and respiratory function.

Furthermore, the text explores the profound neuroendocrine and structural advantages of a regular walking regimen, demonstrating how it enhances cognitive function, down-regulates stress hormones, stimulates osteogenesis, and bolsters immune response to ultimately reduce chronic disease risk and extend clinical longevity.



MEDIFIT
PUBLISHING HOUSE
www.theMedifit.com

Medifit Publishing House

A venture of Medifit Biologicals Private Limited
Medifit Education, Prabhadevi,
Mumbai, India

www.theMedifit.com