

# BENEFITS OF WALKING

## WALKING IS EASY

We all know that exercise is good for us, but the effort of going to a gym is just too much and expensive for most people.

Exercise does not have to mean joining to a gym, a swimming club, a tennis club or a running club.

One of the easiest and most effective exercises you can do is simply to go walking.

A brisk daily walk can help you live a healthier life and it can increase virtually all aspects of your health. The faster, farther and more frequently you walk, the greater the benefits.

The more regularly you walk, the better you will be at it!

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF WALKING

### • It boosts immune function

Research has shown that regular walking can help protect against cold and flu, and if people got sick, it was for a shorter period while symptoms were milder.

### • Improves sleep quality

Physical activity and fresh air will make you to feel tired and will improve quality of sleep – provided that you do not go for a walk just before you want to go to bed. Rather walk early in the morning or at least 2-3 hours before bedtime.

### • Improved breathing

Breathing increases when you walk which helps increase oxygen to the body through the bloodstream. This helps eliminate waste products and increase energy levels and healing ability.

### Slows mental decline

In a study done with women over the age of 65, it was shown that age-related memory decline was lower in those who walked more.

### • A lower risk of Alzheimer's

A study in men 71-93 years of age found that those who walked daily had half the incidence of dementia and Alzheimer's than those who walked less.

### • It is easy to do

You can do it anywhere and you do not need any special permission, clothing, membership or designated time.

### • It is free

You only need a pair of comfortable shoes.

### • It gets you out in the open

Most of us walk within the constraints of four walls. Walking gets you outside breathing in fresh air.

### • It does not require special skills

It is a natural process - the more you walk, the easier and more comfortable it becomes.

### • It can be done alone or with your friends

Walking is a great way to meet people. By making a commitment to meet others on a daily basis not only help you to be motivated, but is also facilitates spending quality time with friends and family while improving your health.

Or it can become the time you set aside to just be by yourself. We all need some alone time and walking alone in a beautiful area will provide that for you.

### • It will trim the waistline

Walking burns calories and before you know it, you will have toned your muscles and developed a smaller waistline. Studies have shown that even a 15 minute walk can curb cravings for chocolates and sugary snacks.

### • It will improve health

Your heart has to work harder when you walk, so the blood circulation and oxygen to the rest of the organs and cells are much better. The heart muscle will also get stronger, which means that overall health will improve.

### • It strengthens bones and muscles

For muscles and bones to grow, we need to exercise regularly. Walking has been identified as one of the best forms of weight-bearing exercise to strengthen bones and tone muscles.

### • It improves your mood

Exercise has been found to reduce stress, anxiety and walkers have reported a general feeling of wellbeing. With exercise chemicals called endorphins are released, which are the body's own pain killers – so walkers reported less pain, especially those who suffered from arthritis and other muscular and joint conditions.

### • It reduces the risk of chronic disease

It has been shown to reduce blood sugar levels and a person's overall risk for developing diabetes.

### • Lower blood pressure

It is well documented that regular walking can lower blood pressure significantly and may help reduce the risk of stroke.

### • It reduces the risk of developing breast cancer

Any kind of physical activity has been shown by researchers to lower the risk of breast cancer and women who walked seven or more hours a week has a 14% lower risk than those who walk three hours or less per week.



## GET READY TO WALK

Now that you know that walking is one of the best things you can do to improve your physical and mental health, let's get you started!

### 30 minutes a day appears to be the magic number

- By brisk walking we mean you can still talk while you walk, but you cannot sing and you may be puffing a little bit.
- If 30 minutes is not achievable, do 10 minutes three times a day and then gradually build it up to longer sessions.

### You can simply do it while going about your daily life:

- Walk up the stairs instead of taking the lift or elevator
- Walk instead of driving to the local shops

Take your dog for a walk every afternoon; it will be good company and your dog will love you even more!

When you walk, posture is important. Walk with your head up, looking straight ahead. Try to keep your neck, shoulder and back muscles relaxed.

You can swing your arms freely, slightly bent at the elbow. When you get a bit fitter, you can even swing the arms more vigorously to increase the amount of calories you burn.

Try to tighten the stomach muscles, to give the tummy a workout as well and focus on rolling your foot from heel to toe.

Plan your route carefully. In the beginning rather choose flat routes. When you are a bit fitter, tackle the hills. Avoid potentially bad or dangerous routes.

Warm up by walking slowly for the first five to ten minutes. The right shoes and protective clothing will help prevent injuries, so invest in a good pair of walking shoes, sunscreen and a hat if you are going to walk regularly.



## CONCLUSION

Walking is by far one of the best and easiest to master exercises there is.

Anybody can do it – from the very young to the very old and the health benefits are almost unbelievable.

Take the first step – it will help you to be happier, healthier and stronger for much longer!

# DISCLAIMER

## TAKE NOTE

The information provided in this article is for education purposes only and does not serve as a medical diagnosis. Members should always consult their healthcare provider with serious symptoms.

Please note that Heritage Health plans do not necessarily cover the costs of the condition/s described.

