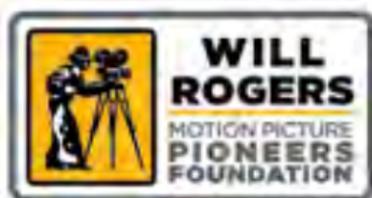


# WALKING FOR BETTER HEALTH



Tips for  
Getting Started



# Get Moving

If your healthcare provider has told you to be more active, it's time to get up, get out, and get moving. Walking is the easiest way to start. You did it when you were a kid, and you can do it again. Walking will help you improve your health—now and in the future.

## Good for Both Mind and Body

Being active is good for you in many ways. It's good for your body, your mind, and even your social life. Some of the benefits of walking are listed below. Can you think of others that matter to you?

### Your Body

- Better overall health
- Longer life
- Lower heart disease risk
- Lower stroke risk
- Lower weight
- Lower blood pressure
- Better blood sugar control
- Better cholesterol counts
- Lower risk of some cancers
- More limber muscles
- Lower osteoporosis risk
- Better blood circulation

### Your Mind

- Less stress
- Better sleep
- More energy
- Better mood
- More fun
- Feeling more relaxed
- Improved concentration
- Better sense of well-being
- Meet more people
- Friendships with other walkers
- Pride of accomplishment

## Beating Excuses

We all make excuses for why we can't be more active. There's some truth behind every excuse. But recognize your excuses for what they are. Don't let them hold you back.

Excuse	Truth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It'll give me a heart attack.</li><li>• I'm too old to exercise.</li><li>• I don't have time.</li><li>• I'm not athletic.</li><li>• Exercise hurts.</li><li>• I just don't want to.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Just sitting around is riskier.</li><li>• You're never too old to start.</li><li>• You have time for what you choose to do.</li><li>• Walking isn't a competition.</li><li>• If it hurts, you're overdoing it.</li><li>• You do want to be healthier, don't you?</li></ul>

## Your Reasons to Be More Active

If you don't really care about being more active, you won't be. It doesn't matter what other people think you should do. Your own motivation is the only thing that will get you up and about. Decide why it's important to you to be more active. Write down your reasons and read the list often to remind yourself. Add to the list as new reasons come to mind.



lose weight  
relieve stress  
feel better



## Your Walking Game Plan

The goal is to make walking a habit. So come up with a game plan that works for you. You're not competing with anybody, and you don't have to prove anything to anyone.

### **What to Wear?**

You don't need special clothes or fancy gear. Any comfortable clothes are fine. If it's hot, wear shorts and a T-shirt. If it's cold, dress in layers. To protect your feet, wear shoes that fit well. Choose shoes with nylon or leather on top, cushioned soles, and good arch support.

## Getting Started

Do what you can today. Tomorrow, do a little more. Then a little more. Maybe it's walking a bit farther, a bit faster, or a bit more often. Keep progressing—but keep it gradual. Try these tips:

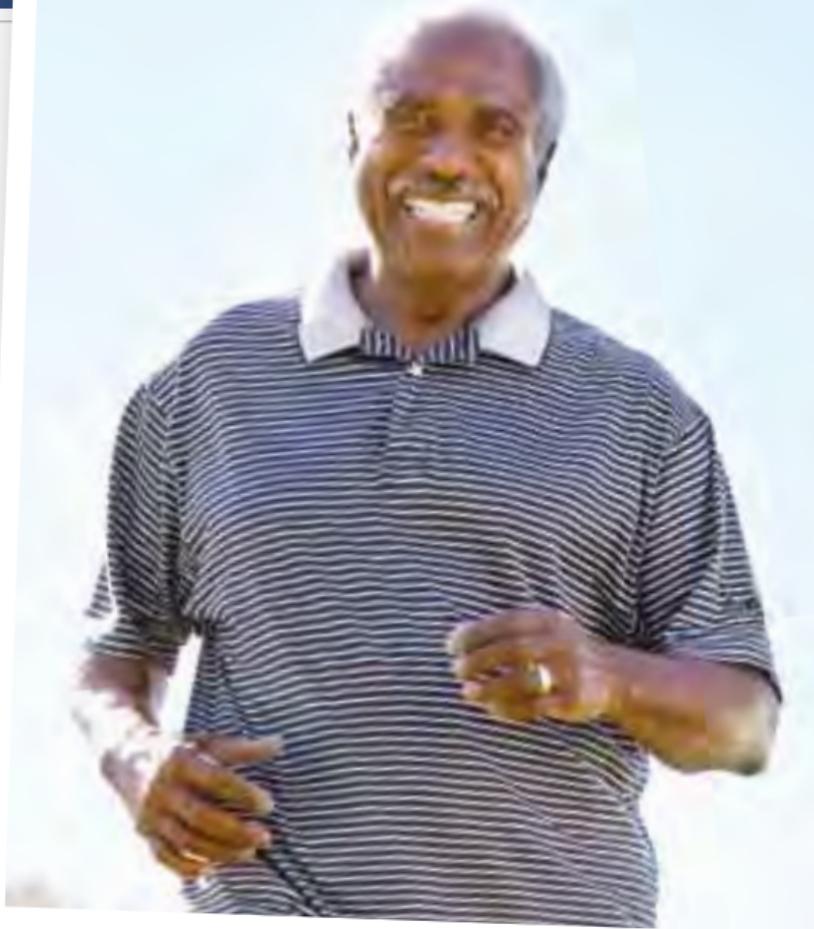
- Start with easy steps, like a short walk around the block before you pick up the mail.
- Get up and walk around the house during TV commercials.
- When you're ready, move on to strolls for at least 15 minutes at a time.
- Work up to brisk walks most days of the week.

## How Long Should You Walk?

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week.

It's fine to do 15 minutes twice a day or 10 minutes 3 times a day. Exercise is like pocket change. Four quarters are just as good as a dollar bill.





## Hitting Your Stride

Each time you go for a walk, gradually build up to a brisk pace. Then gradually slow down.

The goal is steady, fluid progress—not wearing yourself out. Break each walking session into phases: Stroll, Stride, Stroll, Stretch. Gradually work up to the pace you would walk if you were hurrying to an appointment. Then ease back down.

### **Stroll: Speed Up Gently**

Start walking slowly. Take 5 minutes to ease on up to a full stride. Warming up like this loosens your muscles and raises your heart rate little by little.

### **Stride: Move Briskly**

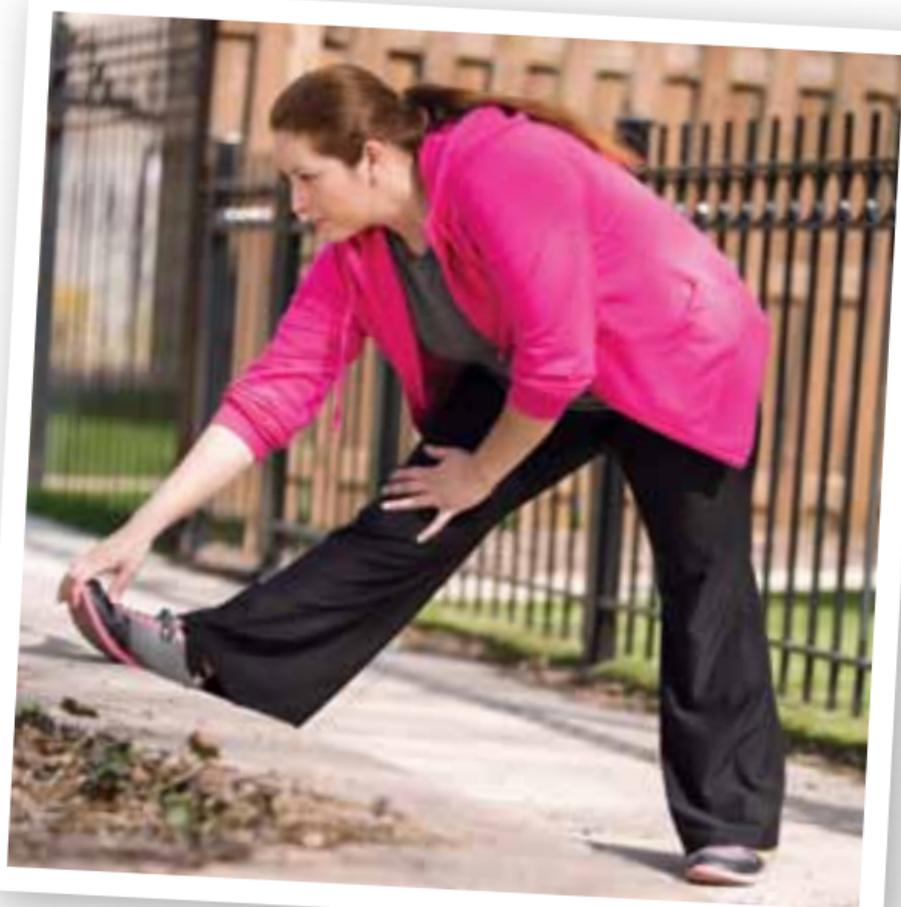
At first, walk briskly for 1 or 2 minutes. Gradually build up to 5 minutes, then 10. When you're ready, start working up to 20 minutes, then 30. A moderate pace is all you need. If you can talk, but not sing, you're doing it right!

## **Stroll: Taper Down**

Now spend 5 minutes slowing back down. This lowers your heart rate and blood pressure gently. That helps to keep you from feeling lightheaded. This is very important if you take certain blood pressure medications.

## **Stretch: Stay Limber**

Finish by gently stretching your legs and arms. Do it in slow motion for 5 minutes. Don't use jerky movements. Hold each stretch a few seconds. If a stretch hurts, ease up. Breathe normally.



## **Make Walking a Lifelong Goal**

What if you skip walking for a while? Put the lapse in the past and take your next walk today. Schedule times to walk. Walking with other people may give you the structure and support to keep at it. Remember your reasons for being active.

# Start Off on the Right Foot

Find ways to make walking fun. Walk with buddies. Scout places you'd enjoy walking. Do your errands on foot. Join a charity walk. Tell your friends, family, and health-care provider about your new habit.

## Count Your Steps

A **pedometer** is a low-cost device that counts how many steps you take. It helps you track your progress toward specific goals. It also reveals trends about your walking habits. Wear one all day.

Then review your daily total steps. Try to add a few more steps each day.

Aim for a goal of walking 10,000 steps a day.



## Find or Form a Group

Ask your local college, gym, church, recreation department, mall, or hospital to help connect you with other walkers. If you can't find an existing group, form your own!

## Get Activities into Your Day

Small activities add up. So don't save steps. Go out of your way to:

- Actively play with your kids or grandkids instead of just watching them.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk to the post office, bank, or store.
- Housework counts! Vacuum, mop, clean, dust, and wash windows.
- Garden, mow the lawn, or wash your car.
- Ride a stationary bike while watching TV, or walk around during the commercials.
- Park the car at the end of the lot and walk to your destination.

# Staying Safe

Getting out and about may take you into different situations. Traffic (cars or bikes), the weather, and even other people may pose some risks. Take sensible steps to make sure you're safe.

## Walking Safely

Pick a safe place to walk. Stay on smooth surfaces. Take a few things with you and form a few simple habits to stay safe.

- Walk with a partner or group, if possible.
- Always walk on the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, walk against traffic.
- Carry a water bottle to stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water, even if you're not thirsty.
- Carry a cell phone in case of emergency.
- Carry any medications for chronic conditions, such as fast-acting glucose for diabetes or nitroglycerin for angina.
- If you are walking late in the day or at night, wear blinking lights or reflectors on your clothing. Also, carry a flashlight.



## Don't Overdo It

If an activity hurts, you're overdoing it. It's normal to feel a little stiff or sore the day after you start a walking program. But if you get any new pain while walking or stretching, stop doing what caused the pain. Also, if you're sick or have an injury that hurts when you walk, stop until you heal. Ask your healthcare provider when it's okay to start again.

## Keep a Comfortable Speed

You should be able to talk while walking. If you can't, slow down. Here are some other signs of walking too fast:

- You have a hard time catching your breath.
- You feel faint, dizzy, or sick to your stomach.
- Your heart is pounding.
- You get symptoms of angina (discomfort, pressure, tightness, or pain in your chest, arm, or neck).

## Don't Take Chances

**If you have any of the warning signs above, slow down right away. If any signs occur suddenly and won't go away with rest or medications, call 911. If new symptoms occur, see your healthcare provider and take a break from walking until you are cleared to start again.**



## Check the Weather

- If it's hot outside, walk during the cooler parts of the day. Look for shady routes. Wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen to protect you from the sun.
- If it's cold outside, wear clothing that will protect you from the cold, rain, snow, or wind.
- Whether it's hot or cold, consider places to walk indoors, such as at a mall or gym.

# Special Considerations

Having certain health conditions, such as diabetes or angina, means taking extra care. Follow the tips below, and ask your healthcare provider for guidance specific to your needs.

## If You Have Diabetes

- Eat 1 to 2 hours before walking.
- Check your blood sugar before you walk. If your blood sugar is low, you may need a snack before walking. (Your healthcare provider will give you specific numbers.)
- Carry glucose tablets or a snack with you.
- Wear seamless cotton socks and shoes that fit well.
- After each walk, check your blood sugar. Also check your feet for blisters, sores, and spots that are red and tender.
- You may need a snack after the activity.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet or carry ID that says you have diabetes.

## If You Have Angina

If you take nitroglycerin for angina, always carry it with you. If you get angina while walking, sit down right away. If pain persists:

- Take a dose of nitroglycerin as directed.
- Sit for 5 minutes after taking it.
- If your angina lasts longer than 5 minutes, or gets worse, **call 911** right away. Do not delay. You may be having a heart attack.
- After you call 911, take a second dose of nitroglycerin. If the angina still doesn't go away, take a third dose. You can take up to 3 doses within 15 minutes. Stay on the phone with 911 for further instructions.



## Keep On Walking!

Things will sometimes upset your walking routine. It will rain outside. You'll be sick. You'll be traveling. Plan now how you'll deal with such roadblocks. Then, when they come up, they won't trip you up.

### Challenges

- Bad weather
- Company comes to visit
- Too busy to walk today
- Not feeling well
- Bored with routine
- Buddy can't join me

### Solutions

- Walk indoors (museum, shopping mall, gym)
- Take them along
- Walk a few minutes at a time
- Move around the house as you can
- Take an exercise class
- Meet others who walk

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