



Start Walking Guide

Why a walking program?

A walking program can help employees improve their health and encourage them to increase their physical activity. It is the simplest, positive change individuals can make to effectively improve heart health. Research has shown that the benefit of walking for at least 30 minutes most days of the week can help:

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease
- Improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Improve blood lipid profile
- Maintain body weight and lower the risk of obesity
- Enhance mental wellbeing
- Reduce the risk of osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of breast and colon cancer
- Reduce the risk of non-insulin dependent (Type 2) diabetes

Types of walkers are novice, beginner, often and frequent.

- **Novice Walker** – has never walked as a form of exercise or has not in years. May be considered inactive or sedentary.
- **Beginner Walker** – has walked extra for exercise in the past six months, but does not walk routinely every month.
- **Often Walker** – walks or runs for exercise at least some of every month for the past six months.
- **Frequent Walker** – walks or runs for exercise at least weekly for the past six months.

When walking remember to:

- Wear appropriate clothing and [shoes](#).
- Drink plenty of water to [stay hydrated](#).
- Avoid injury by stopping or slowing down to read or set your pedometer.
- Keep your eyes on the path and in the direction you're walking.
- Always use handrails when you're walking up or down stairs.

How to get started walking

Before starting any exercise program, especially if you consider yourself to be a novice, inactive, or have pre-existing health conditions, you should always get approval from your doctor.

Determine your baseline steps

A baseline is the amount of steps you normally take in the course of a typical day while doing your normal activities. Set and wear your pedometer (or other wearable device or smartphone), and at the end of a “typical” day record the number of steps you’ve taken. This number will be your baseline.



Use the talk test to determine the intensity level of exercise

According to the American Heart Association, exercise is considered to be:

- **Light intensity** if you are able to sing while doing the activity,
- **Moderate intensity** if you are able to have a conversation comfortably while engaging in the activity, and,
- **Vigorous intensity** if you are too out of breath to have a conversation while engaging in the activity.

Increase walking by walking for a longer duration (time or distance), higher intensity or walking more frequently. It is recommended that you start slowly and gradually increase your time or distance.

The *novice walker* should increase walking by small increments of time, distance or frequency. Increase by one to five minutes or 20 to 50 extra steps. Work up to being able to walk non-stop for 10 minutes at a light or moderate intensity.

Increase walking only after you are able to walk and talk at the current level without difficulty. You may need to set several “mini” goals before you are able to reach your overall [SMART](#) walking goal.

The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of exercise a day. This time can be broken down into smaller sessions such as 10 minutes of walking three times a day.

The beginner walker, often walker and frequent walker can increase walking by increasing time, distance, level of intensity or frequency; adding movement such as swinging arms; or increasing resistance such as adding ankle weights.

Avoiding Injuries

- Walk on designated walkways.
- Listen to your body; monitor your level of fatigue, heart rate and physical discomfort.
- Be aware of signs of overexertion, breathlessness, muscle soreness, dizziness or lightheadedness.
- Take a few minutes before starting a long walk to warm up muscles (light stretching of leg muscles).
- Wear shoes that provide support, good traction and have non-slippery soles.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.
- If signs and symptoms of adverse medical conditions persist, stop walking for exercise and seek medical attention.

Measurement: miles and steps

1 mile is 5,280 feet

Average number of steps	Miles	Average number of steps	Miles
500	.25 (1/4)	5500	2.75
1000	.50 (1/2)	6000	3.00
1500	.75 (3/4)	6500	3.25
2000	1.00	7000	3.50
2500	1.25	7500	3.75
3000	1.50	8000	4.00
3500	1.75	8500	4.25
4000	2.00	9000	4.50
4500	2.25	9500	4.75
5000	2.50	10,000	5.00

Suggestions for getting extra steps

- Park your car further away from your destination.
- Walk at break time and lunch time.

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk to a co-worker's office instead of calling or emailing.
- Take the long way to the water fountain, kitchen, cafeteria, restrooms, etc.