

Benefits of Walking

The Canadian Society of Exercise Physiologists recommends that adults aged 18 to 64, accumulate at least 150 hours of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity per week. Walking is just one of the activities we can do to achieve this.

Walking is low impact, requires minimal equipment, and even 30 minutes per day can lead to health benefits such as improved cardiovascular fitness, stronger bones, decreased body fat and increased muscular strength and endurance. Studies show it can also reduce your risk of osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

The risks of walking are relatively low and it's a great form of exercise for older adults, and those who are new to exercise or are overweight. However, some people should check with their doctor, another health care practitioner who is licensed to diagnose, or a qualified exercise professional before they start becoming more physically active.

This questionnaire will tell you whether it is necessary for you to seek further advice before becoming more physically active. Common sense is your best guide when you answer these questions. Please read the questions carefully and answer each one honestly.

Please note, you should delay becoming more active if you have a temporary illness (such as a cold or fever). It is best to wait until you feel better.

Here are a few tips and tricks for walkers:

- For those with busy schedules, finding time to dedicate to physical activity can be challenging, but there are ways to sneak some extra steps into your day. Consider taking the stairs instead of the elevator, park farther from the entrance, walk to local shops instead of driving, or get off a stop early when taking public transit. If you spend a lot of time sitting, try setting an alarm on your watch or phone to remind you to get up and walk around your home or office for a few minutes every hour.
- Make walking a part of your routine. Schedule a brief walk on your lunch break, or after dinner with your family. If you're working from home, commute by taking a short walk around your neighbourhood before and after work.
- Track your steps to motivate yourself. Use a pedometer, an activity band, or your smartphone to track how many steps you take in a day. We've also [provided some charts](#) to help you estimate your step count. For most people, it is recommended to take at least 8,000 to 10,000 steps every day. This might motivate you to squeeze in one last little stroll before settling down for the evening.

- Bring along some upbeat tunes, a podcast or a guided walking meditation. Keep safety in mind and consider using only one ear bud or keep the volume low enough you can readily hear your surroundings when walking along roadways or other areas with car or bike traffic.
- Prevent injuries by ensuring you set aside at least five minutes before and after for a proper warm-up and cool-down. [Check out our guided warm-up and cool-down videos.](#)
- Adjust the intensity of your walk by walking up hills, increasing your speed, increasing the duration or distance, or by adding hand weights.
- Use an app (or create a paper chart) to track your time and distance. Seeing how you progress can be very motivating. Try Map My Walk, Strava or a similar app.
- Use an app or Google Maps to find new local routes. A change of scenery will be refreshing and help you discover new areas of your community. We like AllTrails.
- Ensure your shoes are comfortable. If possible, consult with a health professional or educated salesperson to find something with appropriate supports for your foot. Gradually break-in new shoes to avoid blisters or foot pain.
- Whenever possible, walk on grass or gravel rather than pavement or concrete. This will absorb some of the impact on your joints. Walking in sand can also increase the difficulty by adding some resistance.
- Schedule walks with a family member or friend who will hold you to your plans and keep you accountable (make sure to comply with current physical distancing recommendations in your community).

Safety considerations for walkers:

- Select routes that suit your fitness level.
- Ease into and out of walks with a gentle pace.
- Drink plenty of water before and after. If you are walking for an extended time, consider investing in a hydration pack or belt to bring water with you.
- Charge your cell phone so it is ready in the event of an emergency. If you don't have one, let someone know where you are going and when you plan to be back – especially if you are walking in a remote or infrequently travelled area.
- Consider bringing a paper map if you are headed to a remote or unfamiliar area.
- Walk with a friend or small group (make sure to comply with current physical distancing recommendations in your community).

- Keep emergency contact information in your pocket if you are walking alone.
- Remember to dress for the weather and consider items such as rain jackets, hats, sunscreen and insect repellent.