



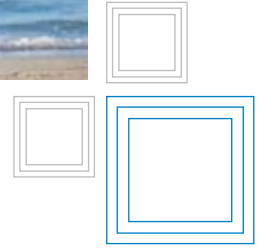
MASSACHUSETTS

Walking





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What's So Healthy About Walking?

No matter how old you are or how healthy you feel, every step you take is a step toward a healthier life. Physical activity doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial. The benefits of walking are far-reaching, making it an easy, ideal way to get into shape and avoid future health risks.

Walking for Better Health

- Walking can reduce your risk of diabetes by as much as 43 percent.*
- Walking can reduce your risk of stroke by as much as 20 percent.*
- Walking can help you get a better night's sleep.
- Walking helps your body convert fat better, allowing you to achieve more lean muscle mass.
- Walking regularly can reduce your risk of obesity by as much as 30 percent.
- Walking can help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level.
- Walking can improve your cardiovascular and respiratory fitness.
- Walking can increase your endurance, boost your energy levels, and help you handle stress better.
- Walking can strengthen your bones, reducing your risk of osteoporosis.

Walking to Lose Weight

If you're trying to lose weight, walking can help. Here are some things to keep in mind as you start taking strides to lose weight:

- If you eliminate 500 calories a day through exercise and eating right, you should lose about a pound a week.
- A pound equals about 3,500 calories.
- Losing more than 1-2 pounds per week on average may not be healthy.
- To burn more calories per mile, pick up the pace.
- Three 15-minute walks will burn about the same number of calories as one 45-minute walk.
- Even five-minute walks will help you stay fit.
- Walking long distances at a moderate pace is more effective than walking short distances at a fast pace.

For more information on the benefits of walking, talk to your doctor or visit www.bluecrossma.com for great interactive walking programs.

*Source: Journal of the American Medical Association, 2003. Health information has been provided by Harris Health Trends, Inc.

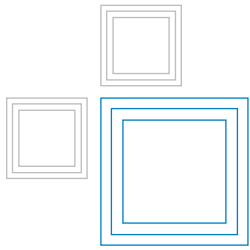
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Education





Tips to Make Your Exercise Plan Stick

For many people, starting an exercise program is easy. However, sticking with it often proves challenging. The tips below don't necessarily apply to everyone, so be aware, make a plan, and stick to it.

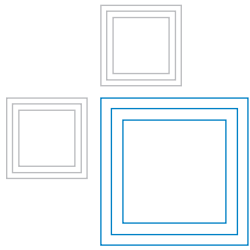
- Exercise on your lunch-hour. Walk to and from errands. Slip small, five- to 10-minute walks into your day whenever you can.
- If you need to talk business with someone or need time to think something through, do it while walking.
- Try exercising early in the morning. The extra energy you get will make it all worthwhile. In addition, studies show that people who exercise in the morning are more likely to stick to their fitness routines.
- Buy new athletic shoes to motivate you to start and keep going.
- Always bring your gym shoes to work, so you can be ready to exercise at a moment's notice.
- When the weather doesn't cooperate, have a backup plan. Walk in a mall or join a fitness center with treadmills or a basketball court.
- Find a friend to exercise with. You can keep each other motivated.
- Get your friends or family together, and go for a walk before or after dinner.
- If you're walking alone, try bringing some music along. Just make sure that you can still hear what's going on around you.
- Treat yourself to some scenery. Try new routes, beaches, parks, or trails.
- Take advantage of the Appalachian Mountain Club discount available through your health plan, and save 20 percent on a one-year individual or family membership.
- When you park your car, park far away and walk to your destination.
- For a little extra motivation, reward yourself for completing short and long-term goals. Goals could include walking two miles without resting, losing four pounds this month, lowering your cholesterol or blood pressure, or signing up for a 5K road race.
- Nothing motivates better than being able to see your progress, so keep an exercise log. Next time you need that extra bit of inspiration, just look how far you've come so far.
- Make sure you have fun during your exercise routine. If you're not having a good time, you're less likely to stick with it.



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Planning

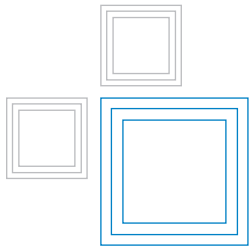




What Keeps You From Being More Active?

Listed below are reasons that people give to describe why they do not get as much physical activity as they think they should. Please read each statement and indicate how likely you are to say each of the following statements:

| How likely are you to say... | Very Likely | Somewhat Likely | Somewhat Unlikely | Very Unlikely |
|---|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. My day is so busy now, I just don't think I can make the time to include physical activity in my regular schedule. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. None of my family members or friends like to do anything active, so I don't have a chance to exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. I'm just too tired after work to exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. I've been thinking about getting more exercise, but I just can't seem to get started. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. I'm getting older so exercise can be risky. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. I don't get enough exercise because I have never learned skills for any sport. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. I don't have access to jogging trails, swimming pools, bike paths, etc. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. Physical activity takes too much time away from other commitments—work, family, etc. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. I'm embarrassed about how I will look when I exercise with others. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. I don't get enough sleep as it is. I just couldn't get up early or stay up late to get some exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 11. It's easier for me to find excuses not to exercise than to go out and do something. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. I know of too many people who have hurt themselves by overdoing it with exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. I really can't see learning a new sport at my age. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 14. It's just too expensive. You have to take a class, join a club or buy the right equipment. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. My free times during the day are too short to include exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 16. My usual social activities with family or friends do not include physical activity. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |



What Keeps You From Being More Active? *(continued)*

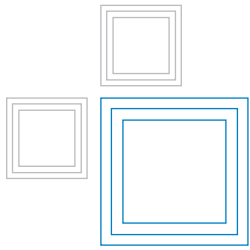
| How likely are you to say... | Very Likely | Somewhat Likely | Somewhat Unlikely | Very Unlikely |
|---|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 17. I'm too tired during the week and I need the weekend to catch up on my rest. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 18. I want to get more exercise, but I just can't seem to make myself stick to anything. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 19. I'm afraid I might injure myself or have a heart attack. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 20. I'm not good enough at any physical activity to make it fun. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 21. If we had exercise facilities and showers at work, then I would be more likely to exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

Score Yourself

- Enter the circled number in the spaces provided, putting the number for statement 1 on line 1, statement 2 on line 2, and so on.
- Add the three scores on each line. Your barriers to physical activity fall into one or more of seven categories: lack of time, social influences, lack of energy, lack of willpower, fear of injury, lack of skill, and lack of resources. A score of 5 or above in any category shows that this is an important barrier for you to overcome.

| | |
|--|--|
| $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 1 8 15 lack of time | $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 5 12 19 fear of injury |
| $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 2 9 16 social influences | $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 6 13 20 lack of skill |
| $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 3 10 17 lack of energy | $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 7 14 21 lack of resources |
| $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ + $\underline{\quad}$ = $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ 4 11 18 lack of willpower | |

Content provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers

Lack of Time

- Identify available time slots. Monitor your daily activities for one week. Identify at least one 30-minute or three 10-minute time slots you could use for physical activity.
- Add physical activity to your daily routine. For example, walk or ride your bike to work or shopping, organize school activities around physical activity, walk the dog, exercise while you watch TV, park farther away from your destination, etc.
- Make time for physical activity. For example, walk, jog, or swim during your lunch hour, or take fitness breaks instead of coffee breaks.
- Select activities requiring minimal time, such as walking, jogging, or stair climbing.

Social Influences

- Explain your interest in physical activity to friends and family. Ask them to support your efforts.
- Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. Plan social activities involving exercise.
- Develop new friendships with physically active people. Join a fitness facility, such as the YMCA, or a group, like a hiking club.

Lack of Energy

- Schedule physical activity during times of the day or week when you feel energetic.
- Convince yourself that if you give it a chance, physical activity will increase your energy level. Then, try it.

Lack of Willpower

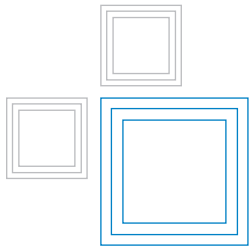
- Plan ahead. Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule and write it on your calendar.
- Invite a friend to exercise with you on a regular basis and write it on both your calendars.
- Join an exercise group or class.

Fear of Injury

- Learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury.
- Learn how to exercise appropriately considering your age, fitness level, skill level, and health status.
- Choose activities involving minimum risk.

Lack of Skill

- Select activities requiring no new skills, such as walking, climbing stairs, or jogging.
- Exercise with friends who are at the same skill level as you are.
- Find a friend who is willing to teach you some new skills.
- Take a class to develop new skills.



Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers *(continued)*

Lack of Resources

- Select activities that require minimal facilities or equipment, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, or calisthenics.
- Identify inexpensive, convenient resources available in your community (community education programs, park and recreation programs, worksite programs, etc.)

Weather Conditions

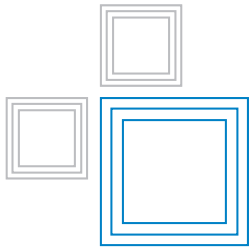
- Develop a set of regular activities that are always available regardless of weather (indoor cycling, aerobic dance, indoor swimming, stair climbing, jumping rope, mall walking, dancing, gymnasium games, etc.)
- Consider outdoor activities that depend on weather conditions (cross-country skiing, outdoor swimming, outdoor tennis, etc.) as “bonuses”—extra activities possible when weather and circumstances permit.

Travel

- Put a jump rope in your suitcase and jump rope.
- Walk the halls and climb the stairs in hotels.
- Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities.
- Join a fitness facility, such as the YMCA or YWCA, allowing access privileges while away from home.
- Visit the local shopping mall and walk for half an hour or more.
- Bring portable music selections.

Family Obligations

- Trade babysitting time with a friend, neighbor, or family member who also has children.
- Exercise with the kids—go for a walk together, play tag or other running games, get an aerobic dance or exercise tape for kids and exercise together. You can spend time together and still get your exercise.
- Hire a babysitter and look at the cost as a worthwhile investment in your physical and mental health.
- Jump rope, ride a stationary bicycle, or use other home gymnasium equipment while the kids are busy playing or sleeping.
- Try to exercise when the kids are not around (e.g., during school hours or their nap time).
- Encourage exercise facilities to provide child care or babysitting services.

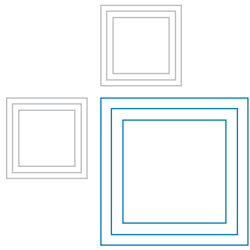


Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers *(continued)*

Retirement Years

- Look upon your retirement as an opportunity to become more active instead of less. Spend more time gardening, walking the dog, and playing with your grandchildren. Children with short legs and grandparents with slower gaits are often great walking partners.
- Learn a new skill you've always been interested in, such as ballroom dancing, square dancing, or swimming.
- Now that you have the time, make regular physical activity a part of every day. Go for a walk every morning or every evening before dinner. Treat yourself to an exercise bike and ride every day while reading a favorite book or magazine.

Content provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



My Exercise Plan

What Days, Time, Activities Will Work For Me:

| | Time | Activity |
|-----------|------|----------|
| Monday | | |
| Tuesday | | |
| Wednesday | | |
| Thursday | | |
| Friday | | |
| Saturday | | |
| Sunday | | |

Filling out the table above and writing your answers to the questions below will help you stay committed to your exercise plan and help you get and stay in shape. Consider making a copy of your exercise plan and giving it to someone that will be supportive as you take steps to get healthier (e.g., doctor, partner, a physically active friend).

What barriers might get in the way of my exercise plan? (e.g., too busy, bad weather) _____

What strategies can I use to overcome these barriers? (e.g., exercise first thing in the morning before the day gets too hectic, have jump rope handy in case of bad weather) _____

My short-term goals (one week to three weeks) are: _____

My long-term goals (one month and longer) are: _____

When I achieve a short-term goal, I'll reward myself with: _____

When I achieve a long-term goal, I'll reward myself with: _____

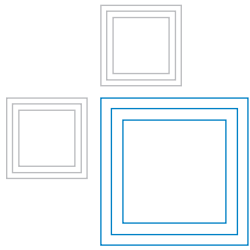
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Activities





Developing a Healthy Walking Routine

Walk this way.

Though walking may seem like a no-brainer, developing a healthy walking routine—complete with proper technique, posture, and stretching—will help you improve results and stay safe. Here are some general guidelines to follow when first starting out.

Step 1: Warm Up

Start with a slow, five-minute walk to warm up your muscles to help reduce the risk of injury.

Step 2: Stretch.

Regardless of what fitness level you're at, stretching is key. It warms your muscles, reduces your chance of injury, increases your circulation, and relieves sore muscles. Always remember to:

- Stretch daily
- Stretch slowly, evenly, and don't bounce
- Stretch until you feel light tension, then hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.

Leg Stretches

Hamstrings

(Muscles in the Back of Your legs)

If touching your toes with straight legs seems too difficult, you're not alone. Many people have tight muscles in the back of the legs. This stretch will give these muscles more flexibility and make it easier for you to bend and reach.

1. Stand facing a sturdy chair.
2. Slowly bend forward at the hip, keeping your legs straight without locking your knees. Rest your hands on the seat of the chair with your elbows slightly bent, feeling a stretch in the back of your upper and lower leg. Keep your back flat.
3. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 20 to 30 seconds, breathing throughout.
4. Release the stretch and repeat.

Note: If this stretch is too easy and you're not feeling a comfortable pull in the back of your legs, try bending your elbows more. Try going as far as to rest your forearms and elbows on the seat of the chair. Just make sure you are bending at the hips and keeping your back straight.

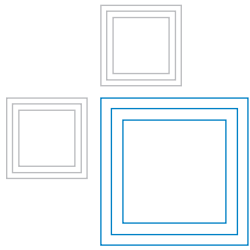


Make Sure You:

Breathe throughout the stretch and concentrate on relaxing.

Keep your back straight as you bend toward the chair.

continued



Developing a Healthy Walking Routine *(continued)*

Calves (Muscles in the Back of Your Lower Legs)

The calf muscles deliver power when walking or jogging, so be sure to feel comfortably stretched before heading out the door or into the gym.

1. Stand with your right foot about six inches from a wall.
2. Bend forward so that your forearms and head are resting on the wall.
3. Bend your right knee and step back with your left foot so that your left leg is straight.
4. Keeping your lower back flat, slowly move your hips forward until you feel the stretch in your left calf. Be sure that your left heel is on the floor as you stretch and that the toes of both feet are pointed straight toward the wall.
5. Hold the stretch for 15 to 20 seconds.
6. After you've stretched your left calf, repeat this stretch on your right.

Quadriceps (Thigh Muscles)

This excellent stretch should be a regular part of your cooldown. It will help these muscles relax and make them more flexible.

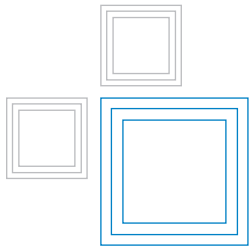
1. Stand next to a counter or sturdy chair with your feet shoulder width apart and your knees straight but not locked.
2. Hold a chair or counter your balance with your left hand. Bend your right leg back and grab your right foot or ankle in your right hand until your thigh is perpendicular to the ground. Make sure you stand up straight—don't lean forward. (If you can't grab your ankle in your hand, just keep your leg as close to perpendicular as possible and hold the bend.) You should feel a stretch in the front of your thigh.
3. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 20 to 30 seconds, breathing throughout.
4. Release your right ankle and repeat the stretch with the other leg.



Make Sure You

Breathe throughout the stretch and concentrate on relaxing. Stand up straight and look ahead. Don't lock your supporting knee.

continued



Developing a Healthy Walking Routine *(continued)*

Upper Body Stretches

Neck, Upper Back, and Shoulders

This easy stretch targets another group of muscles that are easily tensed and stressed—the neck, back, and shoulders.

1. Stand (or sit) with your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees straight but not locked, and your hands clasped in front of you. Rotate your hands so that your palms face the ground. Then raise your arms to chest height.
2. Press your palms away from your body and feel a stretch in your neck, upper back, and along your shoulders.
3. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 20 to 30 seconds, breathing throughout.
4. Release the stretch and repeat.



Make Sure You:

Breathe throughout the stretch.
Don't curve or arch your back.

Chest and Arms

This simple reaching stretch will improve the flexibility in your arms and chest and in the front of your shoulders.

1. Stand with your arms at your sides and your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Extend both arms behind your back and clasp your hands together. Retract your shoulders if possible.
3. Slowly lift your arms up behind you until you feel the stretch in your arms, shoulders, and chest. Be sure to keep your chin up and chest out as you do this stretch.
4. Hold the stretch for a slow count of 15 to 20 seconds.
5. Release the stretch and repeat.

Make Sure You:

Breathe throughout the stretch.
Keep your back straight, relax your shoulders, and look straight ahead.

