

## Exercise: Walking for Wellness



### Why should you walk?

Walking can improve your health. It is a form of aerobic activity, which means it increases your heart rate for an extended time.

### Your personal action plan

A personal action plan gives you a place to write down your reasons to walk and to set goals. For example, you may want to walk to lose a few pounds or because you want to join a community walk. Examples of goals are walking 15 minutes a day or walking to work 3 times a week.

Regular aerobic activity lowers your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. It helps you stay at a healthy weight. And it can help you deal with stress and sleep better.

### How do you get started?

**Start with a reason to walk.** If you have a reason, you're more likely to walk.

**Set an easy goal.** A daily or weekly goal can motivate you. Use the form at the bottom of this page to list your reasons and goals.

**Walk a little more every day.** Try to walk for at least 2½ hours a week. One way to do this is to walk at least 30 minutes on most days of the week. If time is a problem, walk in blocks of 10 minutes or more at one time.

**Walk fast enough to get health benefits.** You don't have to racewalk or run. Walk briskly enough to increase your heart rate and breathing, but not so fast that you can't talk comfortably.

#### Personal action plan

My reason for wanting to walk is:

My goal for this (week or month) is:

## What can help keep you walking?

Once you've started walking, you want to keep doing it. Here are some ways to stay on track:

### Walk with others

- Ask family members, friends, and coworkers to join you. Decide where and how far you want to walk together.
- Take a walk instead of staying inside when you meet a friend.
- Join a walking group or club.
- Set a goal to take part in an organized fitness walk.
- Walk a dog every day.
- Plan family outings around walks. You'll set an example your children can follow as they grow older.

### Walk whenever you can

- Schedule walks on your daily calendar.
- Instead of watching TV or using the computer, go out for a walk.
- At work, get up and move around once an hour. Instead of emailing or phoning a coworker, walk over.
- Try to walk to work or school or when doing errands. You could walk a lap around the grocery store or the mall before you start shopping.
- Park farther away from work or other places you're going.
- Walk during TV commercials.

## Be safe while walking

- Check with your doctor before you start a walking plan if you have heart problems or other health issues, or you have not been active in a long time.
- Know your surroundings. Walk in a well-lighted, safe place.
- Carry a cell phone for emergencies.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that cushion your feet.
- If you worry about tripping or losing your balance, walk on smooth sidewalks and paths.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after walking. Take a water bottle with you when you walk.

## Try a pedometer

A pedometer counts how many steps you take. How does this help you?

- You may be more motivated to walk. If you know how many steps you're taking, you may want to walk more.
- You can set goals for daily or weekly steps with a pedometer. You can easily track your goals and adjust them.
- You may walk more. A quick check may show that you need more steps to meet a goal. You can then add steps to your day.