

# Walk-fit.

Steps to success.



**Most people know that regular exercise is important. But many people cannot find the time to fit exercise into their busy schedules. To address this, we have created the “10,000 Steps A Day” walking programme. The programme shows how to accumulate incidental activity and encourages you to engage in shorter sessions of physical activity throughout your day - all the little steps add up!**

## Why walk?

Walking is one of the best activities to do to improve your health & fitness. It can be done anywhere, anytime, and the benefits are significant:

- Improved cardiovascular (aerobic) fitness
- Increased strength and tone of the major muscle groups
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers
- Helps to lower blood pressure
- Decreased stress and anxiety, increased confidence and esteem
- Promotes bone health
- Boosts energy levels and feelings of vitality
- It's easy on your joints
- Aids in weight management by burning excess calories and increasing metabolic rates
- You can go for a walk any time you feel like it and it needn't cost a thing... and it's FUN!

## How to walk for fitness?

To make the most out of your walk, take a moment to think about your technique:

- **Posture** - aim to keep your head up, stomach pulled in, shoulders square yet relaxed. Look straight ahead with your chest and chin lifted
- **Stride** - keep it natural and comfortable. Lean forward at your ankles (not your waist) and let your body pick its own stride. Keep your feet parallel, strike the ground with the heel and push off with the toe
- **Arm swing** - a free fluid swing will help you maintain your pace. Arm swing opposes leg action and should be purposeful
- **Pace** - aim for a brisk, but steady pace, increase your pace by swinging your arms a bit faster. Your pace is about right if you feel you are working moderately hard, yet not so hard that you can't talk as you walk. Slow down or stop if you feel undue pain, fatigue or shortness of breath

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### Walking gear

The right footwear can make the difference between having a fun, relaxing walk and having an uncomfortable, painful one. Appropriate walking shoes have the following characteristics:

- Provide both support and comfort to all parts of the foot
- Have enough toe room so that you can wiggle your toes
- Have firm support at the heel
- Have a flexible cushioned sole in order to aid in the walking gait and absorb shock
- Are made of breathable material, preferably leather or fabric to allow perspiration to dissipate
- Are lightweight.

While there are many shoes at various price ranges designed specifically for walking, a running or tennis shoe will also serve the purpose, as long as it is comfortable and has the above characteristics.

### Pedometers

A pedometer is a perfect way to enhance your walking. First of all it is fun to know how many steps you have taken, how far you have walked or how long you've been walking. Secondly, a pedometer allows you to keep track of your progress for the purpose of this programme. There are a variety of pedometers available, in its simplest form a pedometer will show the steps taken in a day. More sophisticated models will also show approximate distance covered and calories burned. It is important to remember to re-set your pedometer daily to give you an accurate number of steps taken in a day.

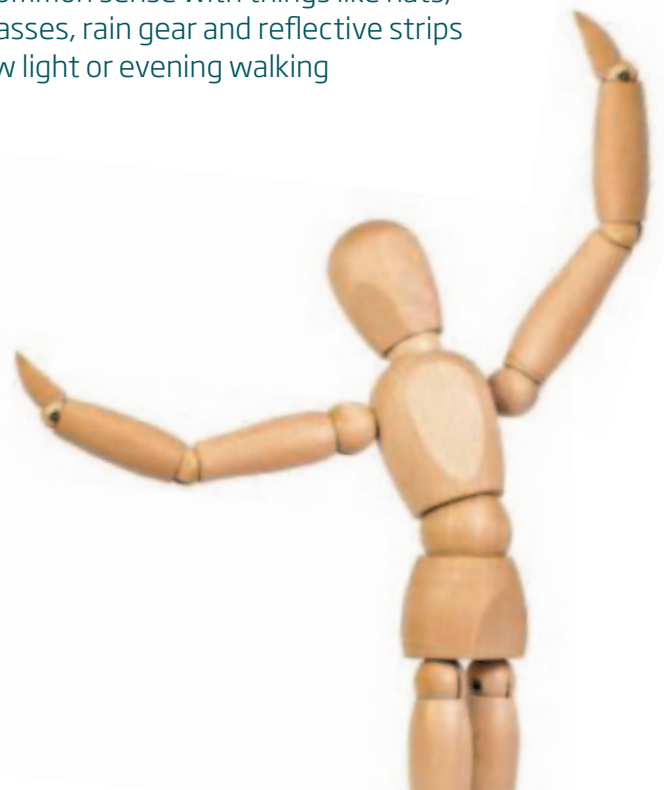
### Safety first

Starting a walking programme could be the best step towards better health and fitness that you ever take. Fortunately, it is very easy to get started. However, there are certain factors that should be considered before you start.

When starting any new activity or exercise programme we recommend you check with your GP or a Physiologist to verify your readiness to participate in the planned activity.

The following tips should ensure your walk is both safe and comfortable:

- Drink water before, during and after your walk to stay hydrated, carry a water bottle on long walks or if it is hot or humid
- Well fitted walking shoes are essential, keep your toenails short for added comfort
- Stay alert to traffic hazards - if you are listening to music when you walk keep one ear uncovered. Ensure you cross roads at the safest points
- Dress to the conditions. Layering is a good idea when it is cold or windy. Layers can be removed as you warm up
- Use common sense with things like hats, sunglasses, rain gear and reflective strips for low light or evening walking



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### Warm-up and cooling down

Warming up helps prepare the muscles, tendons and joints for exercise, reducing risk of injury or strain. Starting out your walk at slow pace and gradually increasing pace over the first 5 - 6 minutes of your walk will ensure you ease into the workout safely. Slow your pace down for the final 5 minutes. Stretching exercises are best done as part of the cool down process. Ensure you stretch your calves, hamstrings, quadriceps (front of the thighs) and hip flexors (front of the hips) as these are the major muscles used in walking.

### How many steps should I take per day?

You may be surprised to learn that you probably take about 5,000 steps, covering a distance of 2-3 miles every day, just by going about your daily business. The recommended number of steps to be taken in a day is 10,000.

Modern life is a busy life, and the good thing about walking is that you do not necessarily need to make extra time to fit in an extra 5,000 steps per day. You can reach your target of 10,000 steps just by being more physically active throughout the day.

Easy ways of increasing the number of steps you take every day and reaching the 10,000 steps goal include:

- Get off the bus a stop or two before the one you would usually get off at and walk the rest of the way. Do the same at the end of the day going home
- Park and stride! Park your car in the furthest space from the office and walk in from there
- Take the stairs instead of the lift at every possible opportunity
- Walk up the escalators
- Get into the habit of going for a short, brisk walk during at least one break in the day
- Take the dog for a walk after work
- Have a family walk at the weekend
- If you are seated during your work, get up and walk around at least once an hour - you need to move at least 5 steps for it to record on most pedometers
- Plan a few walking workouts in your week on top of your daily walking activity

<b>Under 5,000 steps</b>	Inactive / Sedentary
<b>5,000 - 7,499 steps</b>	Low Active
<b>7,500 - 9,999 steps</b>	Somewhat Active
<b>Over 10,000</b>	Active
<b>Over 12,500</b>	Highly Active

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## Building up to 10,000 steps a day gradually...

### Day one

Put on your pedometer in the morning and enjoy a normal day - record the number of steps taken on your daily record sheet. This will enable you to find out your base level of activity. Your aim is to build up the number of steps a day in the Active or Highly Active category on at least 5 days each week:

### Day two

Look at the list of suggestions on the previous page and try to add one of these to your day

### Day three

Add another suggested walking activity into your day

### Rate of increase

A sensible rate of increase is 10% each week. So if you are starting out at an average of 5,000 steps in a day, it will take a number of weeks for you to reach the goal of 10,000 steps a day on 5 or more days a week.

Ideally you should wear your pedometer 5 days a week and aim to reach 10,000+ steps on each of those days. If you want to use the walking programme to help lose weight or manage your weight, aim to work up to a goal 15,000 steps per day.

## Upping the intensity?

If you are after a harder walking workout try the following ideas to boost your work-rate:

- Extend your gait by increasing stride length, rotating from the hip with your footsteps falling almost in a straight line. Bend the arms to about 90 degrees - this shortened arm swing will help you increase your pace
- Head for the hills - graded walking taking in some hills and stairs in your walking route will help to up your workload
- Add some weight to your walk - try a weighted back pack or carrying 1-3 lb hand weights will have both increased aerobic and strength training benefits.

