

FITNESS

Walking Daily

The popularity of walking as a fitness activity is growing by leaps and bounds. Low risk and easy to start, walking has proved its health benefits in numerous studies. People who walk 30 minutes a day experience a significantly lower risk of premature death than those who rarely exercised.

A regular walking program can help:

- Reduce blood cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
- Increase cardiovascular endurance
- Boost bone strength
- Burn calories and keep weight down

A walking program is simple to start. All you need are comfortable clothes and shoes specifically designed for walking.

Every workout should begin with a brief warm-up and a few simple stretches. Walk around the house or in place for a few minutes to get the blood flowing to the muscles before you attempt to stretch them. Although walking primarily works the major muscles of the legs, don't forget to stretch your back, shoulders and arms. This will help to loosen up any tension you may be carrying and make your walk more enjoyable as well as more effective.

Beginning walkers can make their workouts less strenuous by limiting how fast and far they walk. Keep in mind the following:

- **Walk short distances:** Begin with a five-minute stroll and gradually increase your distance.
- **Forget about speed:** Walk at a comfortable pace. Focus on good posture, keeping your head lifted and shoulders relaxed.
- **Swing your arms naturally:** Breathe deeply. If you can't catch your breath, slow down or avoid hills.
- **Be sure you can talk while walking:** If you can't converse, you are walking too fast.

