



NATIONAL
PHARMACIES

A healthier **you** starts here
Walking



Aerobic fitness is important for everyone, no matter what your age.

Experts agree that walking is the best, most natural way to get fit, beat stress and stay trim and healthy. Anyone can reap the benefits from walking more – just a gentle stroll each day will improve all-round health.

Being active is important for us all – and becomes more important as we grow older. Walking at a comfortable speed is;

- > good for general fitness
- > convenient
- > inexpensive
- > and improves heart and lung function

Walking is the single most readily available activity for people of all ages and is a great social activity.

Research has shown that cardio-respiratory or aerobic fitness can be improved by regularly raising the heart rate to a good working level for a period of between 15 and 60 minutes. Walking can help you to achieve this, and help you to feel fitter, stronger and more energetic.

Before getting started see your doctor if you have not been active for some time. A brief medical check-up will ensure that it is safe for you to proceed with an exercise program. You should be particularly careful to seek medical advice first if you have a history of heart disease, chest pains, diabetes, high blood pressure, are very overweight or a smoker.

Regardless of how fit you are, you are advised to start gradually and follow the recommended levels in this guide.

HOW FAST SHOULD I GO?

Use the conversation test while you are walking to determine if you are exercising at the correct pace. If you cannot carry out a conversation without gasping for air, you should slow down, as you may be walking too quickly.

You can also monitor your heart rate while walking. Your heart rate while walking should be within 10 beats of your target heart rate. Target Heart Rate = Maximum Heart Rate x Intensity (expressed as a %). Maximum HR = 220 – (your age). The intensity one should work out at generally varies between 65% and 85% depending on the individual's physical condition, current level of training and other factors. One should consult with their GP to determine the intensity percentage they should commence exercising at.

Example:

For someone aged 40 wishing to work at 75% intensity:

Maximum Heart Rate = 220 – 40 = 180bpm

Target Heart Rate = 180 x 75% = 135bpm

The target heart rate together with the conversation test are valuable in ensuring that you are gaining the most from your walks. If you are walking at a comfortable pace but cannot reach your target heart rate, try swinging your arms more vigorously.

Measuring Heart Rate

- > Place the tips of the first two fingers on the neck lightly adjacent to the Adam's apple OR on the wrist at the base of the thumb ensuring the palm is facing up.
- > Stop walking to take your pulse.
- > Count the number of pulsations within the first 15 seconds after you have stopped walking.
- > Multiply the pulsations by four.
- > The result will give you your heart rate per minute.
- > Consider how you feel overall as well as monitoring your heart rate, noting the stress on the heart and lungs rather than on local muscle fatigue. The best advice is to 'listen to your body.' If you perceive the exercise is too difficult, it probably is! Slowing down and resting for a while is a healthy and wise reaction.

WHAT SORT OF SHOES SHOULD I WEAR?

Your most important walking equipment is a sturdy, comfortable, lightweight walking shoe. If your feet feel good, you will walk well – and you will continue walking. When choosing the right walking shoes, check for:

- > Uppers of high quality, breathable material, such as leather and/or nylon mesh.
- > Lace ups with a comfortable padded heel collar.
- > Substantial arch supports.
- > Shoes that are designed to absorb shock.
- > Shoes that support and cushion the heel somewhat higher than the rest of the foot.
- > Plenty of space around the toe box – toes should not be tight against any part of the shoe.
- > Remember to wear cotton or woollen socks to allow the feet to breathe





DO I NEED TO STRETCH BEFORE I WALK?

It is desirable to stretch both before and after you go on your walk.

Remember the following points:

- > A gentle warm up is recommended prior to stretching, eg walking around and moving the legs and arms (approximately 5 to 10 minutes).
- > Ease into and out of the stretch.
- > Hold the stretch for a slow count of six and repeat two to five times for each leg.
- > Breathe evenly and relax.
- > Don't stretch to the point of pain.
- > Avoid bouncing while stretching.

For further information on Warming up and Stretching see the SASMA Warm up brochure at:

www.smasa.asn.au or www.smartplay.net

10 IMPORTANT TIPS

- 1 Walk smoothly, putting energy into each step and let your arms swing freely by your sides.
- 2 Wear light, loose, comfortable clothing.
- 3 Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunscreen on exposed skin and avoid the hottest times of the day (from around 11am to 3pm).
- 4 If you are going on a long or strenuous walk, drink water before you start and carry a supply with you – especially in hot weather.
- 5 If your breathing becomes uncomfortable, slow down or stop.
- 6 In cold weather, a hat prevents heat loss from the head.
- 7 A small 'back pack' is useful for carrying water, sunglasses, sunscreen, snacks and items of clothing if you get too warm.
- 8 If you are walking when it is dark, wear light coloured clothing so motorists can easily see you.
- 9 Avoid walking immediately after meals
- 10 You may feel some soreness in the early stages of your program. This can be overcome by stretching the working muscles before and after your walk.



HOW DO I STAY MOTIVATED?

Staying motivated is very difficult for some people.

Try some of the following tips to help you remain active:

- > Visit a friend
- > Walk the dog
- > Vary your walks
- > Join a walking club
- > Visit a national park
- > Plan your walks in advance
- > Use the times you walk to think and relax
- > Walk with a friend, in a group, or with your spouse and family

Before you begin walking, be aware that you;

- > Walk in safe areas
- > Postpone your walk if you have a temporary illness or when the weather is extremely hot or humid.
- > Stop walking and consult your doctor if any of the following occur nausea, dizziness, breathlessness or tightness in the chest.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WALK?

Try to walk every day. Ideally, adults should get a total of 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise – like walking – on most days of the week. The more exercise you can do the better, providing you follow the steps discussed in this brochure.

WILL I LOSE WEIGHT?

Body weight is best measured once every four to six weeks. Changes in body weight will only be minor, especially during the starter program. Body weight may in fact increase, as the loss of body fat can be masked by an increase in lean body mass. Walking will muscle tone improve body shape.

WALKING IS GOOD FOR YOU!

If you walk regularly you tend to:

- > Feel more confident, happy and relaxed
- > Control your weight better
- > Have healthier blood cholesterol level
- > Have lower blood pressure
- > Have stronger bones (less osteoporosis)
- > Be less likely to have a heart attack
- > Recover better from a heart attack
- > Be less likely to have a stroke
- > Be less likely to develop diabetes in middle

THE PROGRAM

Monitor your walking program by recording your progress in a notebook.

GETTING STARTED

Below is a suggested starter program. This program may not suit all persons and some may find that they have to commence exercising at a lower level.

Level	Minutes	Times per week
1	10	3 to 4
2	12	3 to 4
3	14	3 to 4
4	16	3 to 4
5	18	3 to 4
6	20	3 to 4

Once walking comfortably at a particular level, aim to progress to the next level if you feel you are able to do so.

If you find this program is too difficult, it is possible to modify it by increasing the number of times you exercise each day and reducing the length of each session until you reach the starter program levels.

The time spent at each level is a matter of experimentation. If you cannot handle a particular level simply go back and spend more time at the previous level.

GRADUAL PROGRESSION

The following is a suggested gradual progression program and follows-on from the starter program.

Level	Minutes	Times per week
1	20	3 to 4
2	22	3 to 4
3	24	3 to 4
4	26	3 to 4
5	28	3 to 4
6	30	3 to 4
7	33	3 to 4
8	36	3 to 4
9	39	3 to 4
10	42	3 to 4
11	45	3 to 4
12	48	3 to 4
13	51	3 to 4
14	54	3 to 4
15	57	3 to 4
16	60	3 to 4

MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

In the maintenance program the aim is to maintain the same energy expenditure per week and therefore the time spent walking (at the required intensity) per week. In other words, when you have reached the level on the gradual progression program that you feel is comfortable for you, it is desirable to maintain this level of walking as a regular habit. If you have a long break e.g. holidays or illness, then it is wise to return to the starter program or gradual progression program in order to attain your maintenance level once again.

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The information in this brochure is of a general nature. Individual circumstances may require modification of general advice from an appropriate Health Professional eg. Doctor

