



WALKING JOURNAL



Massachusetts
Councils On Aging

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Welcome! You can do this.

Know the Benefits

Walking can help you maintain or improve your health.

It can help you:

- Maintain a healthy weight by reducing body fat
- Prevent or manage conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, joint pain, and muscular stiffness, and type-2 diabetes
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Increase endurance and improve balance and coordination
- Improve your mood
- Sleep better
- Do more, longer



Get the Right Gear

Like with any exercise program, having the right gear for walking is important.

- Make sure your shoes are comfortable, with appropriate heel and arch supports. Firm heels with thick, flexible soles cushion your feet and absorb shock.
- Wear socks to cushion and protect your feet. Avoid cotton socks which hold sweat against your feet and allow blisters to form more easily.
- Wear comfortable clothes and gear appropriate for various types of weather.
- Wear light layers that you can remove or add as needed.
- If you walk outdoors when it's dark, wear bright colors or reflective tape for visibility.
- For daytime walking, wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.



Consider Your Technique

Turning your normal walk into a fitness stride requires good posture and purposeful movements.

Here's the idea of how you should look when walking:

- Your head is up. You're looking forward, not at the ground.
- Your neck, shoulders, and back are relaxed, not stiffly upright.
- You're swinging your arms freely with a slight bend in your elbows. A little pumping with your arms is OK.
- Your stomach muscles are slightly tightened and your back is straight, not arched forward or backward.



Choose Your Course

Choosing the right course is important. You want to be certain you have a good walking surface and walk in safe, brightly lit areas. Additionally, varying your course will keep it interesting.

- If you'll be walking outside, avoid paths with broken sidewalks, potholes, low-hanging limbs, or uneven turf.
- If the weather isn't appropriate for walking outdoors, consider walking in a shopping mall that offers open times for walkers.
- Vary your route. If you want to stick close to home and limit your walking to neighborhood streets, pick different routes so you don't get tired of seeing the same sights.
- If you feel unsafe walking alone, find one or more friends or family members to walk with, or join a walking club.
- Walk at various times of the day. The sights you see first thing in the morning are bound to be different from those of the afternoon or early evening.
- Drive to different parks or reserves, park the car, and enjoy the views while you walk.
- Be mindful of what's going on around you: notice the sky, the people, the sounds.

Be Safe

Walking is generally a safe way to exercise, but look out for unexpected hazards.

- See your doctor for a check-up before starting any new fitness program.
- Choose walks that suit your age and fitness level. Brisk is a relative term – the speed of brisk walking is different for different people. “Brisk” walking means that you can still talk but not sing, and you may be puffing a little, but you shouldn’t be breathless.
- Always include a warm up and cool down. Walk slowly for a few minutes at the beginning and end of your walk to warm up and cool down your muscles. A gentle stretch is also good after your cool down. If you prefer to stretch before you walk, make sure to warm up first.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing, and appropriate footwear to avoid blisters and shin splints.
- Take waterproof clothing to avoid getting wet if it rains.
- Drink plenty of fluids before and after your walk. If you are taking a long walk, take water with you.



Increase the Intensity

Our bodies tend to get used to physical activity, so continue to increase your intensity as you are able to in order to improve your fitness levels.

- Walk up hills
- Increase your walking speed gradually by including some quick walking
- Wear a weighted vest or carry a weighted backpack
- Take the stairs
- Increase the distance you walk quickly before returning to a moderate walking pace
- Walk for longer periods of time or a longer distance

Track Your Progress

Keeping a record of how long and far you walk lets you see your progress and can serve as a source of inspiration. Just think how good you'll feel when you see how many miles or minutes you've walked each week! Record these numbers in your walking journal.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Total
Week 14								
Week 15								
Week 16								
Week 17								
Week 18								
Week 19								
Week 20								
Week 21								
Week 22								
Week 23								
Week 24								
Week 25								
Week 26								

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								
Week 6								
Week 7								
Week 8								
Week 9								
Week 10								
Week 11								
Week 12								
Week 13								



Don't Give Up

Starting a walking program takes initiative. Sticking with it takes commitment. Set yourself up for success with realistic goals and take missed days in stride. If you find yourself skipping your daily walks, don't give up! Remind yourself how good you feel when you include physical activity in your daily routine, and then get back on track!



	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								
Week 6								
Week 7								
Week 8								
Week 9								
Week 10								
Week 11								
Week 12								
Week 13								



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