

Are you ready to get in shape, but not sure where to begin? Start walking!

You can do it anywhere, it doesn't require fancy equipment, and the results are amazing.

Walking is a great way to help lose weight and a proven method to keep weight off! Walking is the exercise of choice for more than 2,300 members of the National Weight Control Registry database who've successfully lost an average of 66 pounds and kept the weight off for more than 5 years.

Regular, moderate physical activity has been shown to lower the risk of or improve the symptoms of many chronic diseases. Exercise helps build muscle and bone strength and improves balance and flexibility—all of which can protect your body from falls that can cause debilitating fractures. Exercise may also boost the immune system to help fight off colds and flu, control arthritic symptoms such as joint swelling and pain, improve mood and self-confidence, and enhance a deeper sleep.

It's never too late to Start! Even if you don't begin walking until middle age, you'll increase your life expectancy. The benefit is hard to measure accurately, but a Harvard Alumni Study conducted by *Dr. Ralph Paffenbarger* and his colleagues and published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1986 found that individuals lived two hours longer for every hour of regular exercise they did.

Walking is inexpensive: all you need is a good pair of walking shoes and a safe place to walk. You can walk in your community, at indoor malls, school campuses, and even on a treadmill (if the weather is not cooperating!).

Walking is a natural activity that doesn't require any special skills or training and is low-impact so it is easy on your joints. Walking is the only exercise that does not decrease with middle age and beyond. And you can combine it with other activities such as walking the dog, grocery shopping, talking on the phone, and more!

Walking is healthy! Numerous research studies have reported walking prevents or delays the onset of many chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes, arthritis, and certain cancers.

Walking is appealing to many individuals who find other types of exercise embarrassing.

Walking burns about the same amount of calories per mile as jogging without the impact and **thirty minutes of continuous brisk walking will burn** more calories than gardening, mowing the lawn or sitting at your desk for the same amount of time.

Walking is safe for most people but if you have been inactive in the past year or if you have heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes check with your healthcare provider before beginning exercise.

How Should I Get Started?

- Determine how active you are now — and work on up!
- Start slowly – Warm up by starting off slowly, increase your speed, and cool down at the end.
- After your walk is a great time to stretch!
- Set goals — 30 minutes or more a day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
- Divide the 30 minutes into chunks of 15 or even 10 minutes.
- Ask your spouse, a friend or co-worker to become your walking partner — it's more fun and you can encourage each other!