

2 Walking Tips to Get Started

The first step

Experts suggest that we should aim to be active for 30 minutes a day, on most (if not all) days of the week. When starting you can work your way up to 30 minutes gradually. Walking for shorter periods on a regular basis will improve stamina and make it easier to achieve 30 minutes of walking a day.

- Try to make walking part of your normal day
- Start with a 10 minute walk on most days
- Gradually try to increase this to 3 times a day or 15 minutes twice a day
- Think of ways of getting more walking into your daily routine

Health Check

If you have health concerns regarding your ability to be active you may wish to talk to your doctor or other health professional about what is best for you.

Important tips for getting started

Walking is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages and abilities. The following things should be considered before you get out walking!

- **Warm-up activity** - start by walking slowly then gradually increase your speed as you feel your muscles and joints warming up
- **Build activity slowly** - start with a 10-20 minute walk then build up to 30 minutes. Try to walk at least three times each week, and gradually increase to once each day as you get used to it.
- **Use the correct technique** - walk at a steady, smooth pace, swing arms freely and stand as straight as you can. Take light, easy steps and make sure your heel touches down before your toes.
- **Safety** - don't walk straight after meals or when you are unwell. If breathing becomes uncomfortable, slow down or stop walking. See Fact Sheet 7 for more information on Safety.
- **Clothing** - wear comfortable clothing that is right for the weather.
- If walking when it's dark, wear light coloured clothing so motorists can easily see you and try to walk with someone else
- **Shoes and socks** - wear thick comfortable cotton socks and comfortable, flat soled, lightweight shoes which support your feet. See Fact Sheet 9 for more information on Footwear.
- **Weather** - protect yourself from the sun with clothes, sunglasses, a hat and sun block. Avoid walking during the hottest times of the day. See Fact Sheet 8 for more information on Sun Protection.
- In cold weather, wear layers as these can be taken off as you warm up
- If raining, wear waterproof clothing and a hat to avoid getting wet and cold
- For longer walks a small backpack is useful for carrying water, sunglasses, sunscreen, snacks and items of clothing if you get too warm
- **Water** - drink water before, during and after walking. Take water with you in warm weather or on long walks.
- **Cool down** - finish by slowing down your walking for the last few minutes.

Acknowledgement

This information has been sourced from Kinect Australia (Inc VICFIT in Victoria), the Better Health Channel, Parks Victoria and The Department of Human Services through the Go for your life website. See Fact Sheet 11 for details.

Funding for the Community Walking Grants program is made available through the Victorian Government's Community Support Fund.

Keep it interesting and fun

The following ideas may help you to incorporate regular walking into your lifestyle and make it more fun!

- Walk with a friend and combine physical activity with socialising
- Choose to walk to your destination rather than drive. See Fact Sheet 4 for more ideas on Incidental Walking.
- When starting, use pathways, tracks, and parks close to home. Then try State and National parks and bushwalking trails as you progress. See the 'My Pathways' section for information on walking tracks in your area.
- Consider an indoor venue like a shopping centre, or your verandah when it is too hot or raining
- Try to walk a little bit further each time
- Use a pedometer to measure steps. See Fact Sheet 5 for more information on Pedometers, and the Pathways log book for your walking program.
- Pick a track that is a circular route and links your home with a local park. Stop by a friend's house for coffee on the way.
- Join a local walking group to get more ideas and new routes. See Fact Sheet 10 on 'Starting your own Walking Group', and the 'My Pathways' section for information on walking groups in your area.

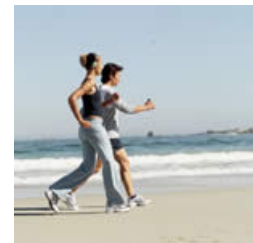
Set a comfortable pace

Start with a pace of walking that you feel comfortable with and will be able to keep up over the time of your walk. Slowly build up pace over time as this will develop your fitness.

Handy hint - you should be able to talk comfortably as you walk.

Increase the effectiveness of your walks by:

- Increasing walking speed
- Including hills or stairs in the route
- Increasing walking distance
- Walking for longer
- Walking with hand weights, or a backpack with weight in it



Finding the motivation - suggestions for 'those' reasons

- **I don't have time.** Think about how to make more time for yourself, and how others can help. Then set a time and stick to it.
- **Walking is work.** To experience health benefits, you only need 4 hours of physical activity per week. That's only 2.3% of the week!
- **I'm too tired.** Walking benefits here are twofold: it improves energy levels throughout the day, and it improves the quality of sleep.
- **Walking is boring.** Walk with a friend. Take different routes. Listen to music. Take the dog. There's heaps of ways to make walking more fun.
- **I'm not confident.** Start slow: walk in the backyard, then your street or park. Walk with friends or family. You will gain confidence as you go.

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