

7 Safety

Warming up and cooling down

The best way to warm up is to walk slowly. Start off each walk at a leisurely pace to give muscles time to warm up, and then pick up the speed. Afterwards, gently stretch your leg muscles as below.

At the end of your walk, decrease the pace and walk slowly as this will also prevent muscular stiffness and injury. Gently repeat the leg stretches.



Calves



Hamstrings



Quadriceps

Safety suggestions

Safety should be considered when walking, especially if you choose to walk in parks or reserves that offer difficult terrain or long trails.

Suggestions include:

- If you have concerns about your health see a doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program
- Remember to warm up and cool down to reduce the risk of injuries, as above
- Wear sunglasses, sunscreen, a long-sleeved shirt and a hat to avoid sunburn (see Fact Sheet 8 for more information on Sun Protection)
- If you are walking on your own, stick to areas that you are familiar with - choose busy, more populated areas
- Carry a walking stick or umbrella to fend off unleashed or unfriendly dogs
- Wear comfortable shoes with good cushioning (see Fact Sheet 9 for more information on Footwear)
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after walking
- Watch for terrain or walking paths in a poor or unsafe condition
- Don't overexert yourself
- Walking should not cause pain or discomfort: if you experience this stop the activity. Consult a doctor and seek their advice about following an activity program that manages your specific problems.



Acknowledgement

This information has been sourced from Community Building, The Better Health Channel and Deakin University through the Go for your life website. See Fact Sheet 11 for details.

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Bushwalking safety suggestions

When heading off the beaten track there are some simple steps to take **before you go and while walking** to avoid risk to you and other walkers.

Handy hint - check with Parks Victoria as to which reserves and parks are appropriate for your age and fitness level.

- Generally, about six hours for a bush walk (including rest breaks) is more than enough for the average person
- Plan the walk to be well within your physical capacity and level of experience
- Tell someone where you are going and the estimated time of return
- It is best to have at least three companions while bushwalking. This means that one person can look after someone with an injury, while the others go for help.
- Take maps of the area, and a compass. Read warning and advisory signs. Stay on the path.
- Check the weather forecast and take appropriate safety measures (for example, pack correct clothing, take enough drink and food to last, pack matches in a water-tight container, take a first aid kit and a whistle)
- Take a mobile phone. However depending on your location, you may or may not have reception during your walk.
- Look out for hazards such as cliff edges, rocks or large waves
- If lost, stay at that location, be as visible as possible, relax and conserve energy

Environmental considerations

While walking through Victorian parks and reserves, make sure to keep environmental damage to a minimum. Suggestions include:

- Stick to the paths
- Most state and national parks forbid domestic animals, firearms and chainsaws
- Don't take souvenirs (such as rocks or plants), pick flowers, or interfere with any animals
- Some parks don't allow fires, while others provide clearly signed fireplaces or gas or electric BBQs
- Don't light any fires on a Total Fire Ban day
- Don't litter. Take all rubbish home with you.



Acknowledgement

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