

10 Starting your own Walking Group

Walking with other people provides an opportunity to socialise and helps to encourage you to reach personal goals.

Informal/casual walking groups

Starting an informal or casual walking group is simple!

- Recruit friends or family who are keen to walk
- Arrange with them which days and times suit best
- Arrange the best meeting place, or 'pick-up' people along the way
- Plan routes and how long the walks will be
- Discuss a 'Plan B' in case the weather is poor
- Walk!



Formal walking groups

Starting a group doesn't require much. Spread the word and get organised – before you know it the group will be taking steps towards better health.

Hold a meeting

- Distribute a flier with details of the meeting including where it will be held, when and what time
- Think about encouraging all different groups to attend, such as people with disabilities, cultural groups, older adults, young parents, or indigenous people
- Consider targeting a specific group - for example younger/older, fit/unfit, mums with prams, people with disabilities, or all ages and abilities
- Post your flier in places where your target group will go such as local shopping centres, post offices, Churches, Community Centres, workplaces or health clubs. Make sure your flier is welcoming to a broad range of people.
- Newsletter articles and letterbox drops are also great promotional methods
- Consider a guest speaker to speak about the benefits of walking, e.g. a health professional or local identity who is an active role model
- Provide information on the benefits of walking, warm up and down exercises
- A handout can be given on general information, such as what to wear, sun protection and to promote and encourage self-care - feel free to use the information in this resource
- Discuss:
 - Which days and times are most convenient
 - The best place to meet (somewhere with parking, shelter and toilets)
 - Proposed routes to walk, including distances
 - How often to walk, and the suitability of the walks to all participants
 - Set a date for your first walk
- Provide your contact details for group members, and get them to provide theirs

Acknowledgement

This information has been sourced from CNN.com, Get Walking Tasmania, About.com and Kinect Australia (inc VICFIT in Victoria). See Fact Sheet 11 for details.

- Potential walkers could fill out a self-assessment of whether they are a fast walker or a slow walker. Suggest a medical check-up if the person has been inactive for a while.
- Consider whether to charge a small fee per walk, or membership fee which can go towards club resources or expenses

Maintain the group's momentum

As the group leader, encourage the group to have a motivational meeting at least once a month. Motivational activities may include:

- Deciding on a name for the group, designing a team logo or producing merchandise
- Developing a newsletter, making up a calendar of group walks, or attending other events together
- Starting an email group to stay in constant contact
- Entering charity walking events as a group
- Competing with other walking groups for distance walked or money raised for charity
- Inviting a guest speaker to discuss topics of interest
- Sharing stories about how walking affects your physical and mental health
- Welcoming new members
- Celebrating the success of the group
- Social events - breakfast after the morning walk, picnics, travelling to walks, overnight camping/walking trips
- Developing a club incentive program. This can include certificates or awards for attaining milestones or achieving other goals.
- Research new tracks together

The best bet is to ask the group what sorts of activities they would like to do, which will help them get involved and make the activities happen.

Enjoy yourself

The friendship you experience in a walking group can help everyone stay on track with their walking and fitness goals. The new friends you meet can also make it well worth the effort.

Formal walking groups in Victoria to affiliate with

Walk & Talk - Kinect Australia (inc Vicfit in Victoria)
 Phone: (03) 8320 0100
 Email: enquiries@vicfit.com.au
 Website: <http://www.vicfit.com.au/walkntalk/>



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