

GET WALKING KEEP WALKING

FREE EXERCISE FROM YOUR DOORSTEP



IMPROVE YOUR
HEALTH!



WALK AWAY
FROM STRESS!



HELP CONTROL
YOUR WEIGHT!

EXPLORE THE
LOCAL AREA!

SPEND QUALITY
TIME WITH FRIENDS
AND FAMILY!

The Ramblers



www.getwalking.org.uk

Walking is such an ordinary everyday activity, most people take it for granted. But in fact it's an excellent natural exercise that can help you stay healthy and live longer, control your weight, keep happy, enjoy time with friends and family, learn more about your local area and even look after the environment.

THE CLOSEST THING TO PERFECT EXERCISE

Yes, walking really is good exercise.

Walking for a total of 30 minutes a day, or 60 minutes for children, meets the Chief Medical Officer's minimum recommendations for physical activity. This doesn't have to be done in one walk: it can be split into two or three shorter walks.

Doctors agree that moderate exercise like walking helps protect the body from many illnesses and conditions, including heart disease and stroke, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, obesity, the most common type of diabetes and many cancers.

It's also a great way to relieve stress and stay happy. Everyone knows how a good walk can help you collect your thoughts, and being outdoors, especially in green spaces, can help fight depression and improve mental health.

"Over the last few months I have lost over a stone and have no doubt that walking has helped me achieve my goals. I walk regularly at least four times a week – it's a very social activity with the added bonus of helping me to stay fit and healthy. Now I'm always desperate to get out and every time I want to walk a little bit further and faster. In short, walking is magic."

Chrissie

And the best news is – almost everyone can do it, anywhere and at any time, for free! You don't need special clothing, equipment or training, there are no gym memberships to pay, and it's so easy and natural there's very little risk you'll injure yourself.

AND THERE'S MORE...

Another great thing about walking is that it lets you do two or more things at once. So while you're getting healthy exercise, you could also be:

- ▶ Getting to places you need to visit, for example by walking to work, school or the shops.
- ▶ Spending time with others – friends, children and family. Walking and talking go hand in hand and you might even make new friends along the way.
- ▶ Exploring your local area – it's the best way to discover hidden corners up close.
- ▶ Enjoying green spaces and nature – fresh air, peace and a place for the kids to run around.
- ▶ ...or just taking time to relax by yourself!

And since walking doesn't cause congestion or pollution, whenever you choose to walk, rather than take the car, you're being kind to our environment as well as to yourself.

WALKING WORKS WONDERS!

THE CLOSEST THING TO PERFECT EXERCISE



WHY NOT WALK MORE?



YOUR REASONS REASONED WITH...

“I DON’T HAVE THE TIME.”

Walking is by far the easiest exercise to fit into a busy lifestyle since you can do it anywhere at a time that suits you. Every minute you spend walking is quality time, rather than sweating on a packed bus or train or fuming in a traffic jam. You’ll still have to make a little effort to find time, but remember active people live longer and have a healthier old age – so think of your walking time as a good investment.

“I DON’T KNOW ANY GOOD PLACES TO WALK.”

Sometimes main roads don’t feel pleasant and safe for walkers. But there are plenty of quieter streets, parks, watersides and green spaces even in busy urban areas if you know where to look for them. See p14 for tips on finding good places to walk.

“I DON’T FEEL SAFE ON THE STREETS.”

It’s understandable that people are concerned for their personal safety and security – but it’s a great shame if this stops

you enjoying the benefits of walking. If you can, walk with a companion, and see p7 for more advice on staying safe. Also, the more people walk, the safer the streets will be.

“I DON’T HAVE ANYONE TO WALK WITH.”

Why not ask your family, friends and colleagues if they’re interested in walking with you? Or try an organised programme or led walk – see p14.

“MY KIDS WON’T WALK!”

Exercise is essential for children but it can be difficult to get them away from their games consoles! See p12-13 for advice.

“I’M TOO UNHEALTHY TO WALK.”

Walking is a natural and undemanding exercise and you can start off by doing very little and building up slowly – so it’s perfect for people who are seriously unfit or recovering from an illness. Very few people are so unfit they’d endanger themselves by walking – but as with any other exercise programme, if you have any doubts, talk to your doctor first.

“I DON’T KNOW HOW TO GET STARTED.”

Simply turn the page and read on....

“Walking has changed my life.”

New walker, Sheffield



GETTING STARTED



FACT: Pass the 'talk test' – you should always be able to hold a conversation while you're walking. **FACT:** A brisk 1 mile walk in 20 minutes burns around 100 calories (2 chocolate digestives).

IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

Getting started is as simple as putting on a pair of shoes and a jacket and stepping out of your front door for a turn around the block! But to make things even easier, you'll find a 12-week plan overleaf that starts you off slowly and easily. You'll be surprised at how quickly your abilities increase and you should soon have no problem in meeting – and exceeding – that 30-minute target.

CHECK YOUR POSTURE:

- ▶ Stand up straight but relaxed, with your eyes ahead.
- ▶ Swing your arms in time to your stride.
- ▶ Breathe deeply, in rhythm with your steps if you can.



PRACTICAL TIPS

- ▶ Wear comfortable clothes and sturdy, comfortable shoes or trainers.
- ▶ Several thin layers of clothing are better than one thick layer. You can take off layers as you warm up, or add them if you get cold.
- ▶ Unless you're sure it's not going to rain, take a good jacket – it's easier than an umbrella.
- ▶ Wear a hat: it keeps you warm in winter and protects you from the sun in summer.
- ▶ Wear gloves if it's cold – it's difficult to walk briskly with hands in pockets.
- ▶ Wear sun cream if you're going to be outdoors for any length of time.
- ▶ Take some water, and some food too if you're going on a longer walk. Drink some water before and after your walk.
- ▶ A small backpack is more comfortable to walk with than an ordinary bag.

STAYING SAFE

- ▶ Choose routes that are well-used, and well-lit if you walk at night.
- ▶ Know where you're going – if you don't know the area well, try to get a map or leaflet.
- ▶ Be prepared to change your route if you feel unsafe for any reason.
- ▶ Take a travel pass, or change, in case you need to use public transport.
- ▶ Take a mobile phone and/or make sure someone knows where you've gone and when you expect to be back.
- ▶ If you wear headphones, make sure you stay aware of your surroundings.
- ▶ Take care on busy roads and road crossings, and paths shared with fast cyclists.

Note: If you're going into the countryside, particularly hilly areas, there are a few other precautions to take – get more information from the Ramblers' Association (see inside back cover).

IMPORTANT HEALTH INFORMATION:

For most people, walking is a safe and effective form of exercise and you can start without checking with a doctor. However, if you're very unfit, are suffering or recovering from serious illness or have any other concerns about your health, discuss this with your doctor before starting the plan. It may be that you need to follow our plan more slowly and gradually, particularly if you're trying to walk briskly.

12-WEEK WALKING PLAN

WEEK



1-2



3-4



5-6



7-8



9-10



11-12

MONDAY - FRIDAY

Just aim to walk a little more as part of your daily routine. Try walking to a bus stop slightly further from home, or walking one way to the shops and getting a bus back. Get into the habit of walking up stairs and escalators.

10-15 mins
Aim to do at least one walk of ten minutes on three days a week. So time yourself and try not to stop for ten minutes.

2 x 10-15 mins
Add another walk of 10-15 minutes on two or three days of the week. Perhaps one in the morning and one at night.

2 x 15 mins
Try to walk for 15 minutes twice a day on every day this week. Now you're reaching the amount of exercise doctors recommend for good health.

2 x 15 mins
Don't worry if you're slipping behind...use these weeks to catch up. Aim for two walks of 15 minutes each day, walking briskly on at least one of them.

30 mins
Aim for 30 minutes of brisk walking each day. This can be in two sessions, but one session is better still. You've now reached the level doctors recommend for good health.

SATURDAY OR SUNDAY (or another weekday if more convenient for you)

This is your chance to vary your walk a little. Try a different route, go to visit friends or a nearby park.

20-30 mins
Try a slightly longer walk in pleasant streets, a park or along a river or canal.

30 mins
Do at least one 30 minutes walk in pleasant surroundings but walk briskly for most of the way.

30 mins
Try walking briskly for at least 30 minutes on your weekend walk.

30-60 mins
Try a longer walk of up to 60 minutes on one day a week. Look for pleasant surroundings, relax and enjoy!

60+ mins
Now you're a fit and healthy walker, enjoy your new-found freedom by going further from home.

"I joined a Ramblers Get Walking programme, met lots of different people and really enjoyed myself. Since then I've been walking to work and have now got friends at work to start walking too. I love walking – it makes me feel fit and happy, It's also helped me cut out chocolate and I've lost about 5kg since I started. When the sun is out, it's time to walk!" **Anthony**



FACT: Regular walking reduces the risk of coronary heart disease by up to 50% (Department of Health). **FACT:** Brisk is best, but every bit counts – even leisurely strolls around the garden.

“I suffer from bipolar disorder (manic depression) and was forced to leave my job. I’d reached rock bottom and also developed heart problems, and then I started walking with my partner, at first just through local parks. It’s stabilised my condition, improved my general health and also boosted my confidence – I’m now volunteering for a local charity. Walking really has changed my life!” **Meeta**



FACT: Walking a mile uses roughly the same amount of calories as running a mile.

MAKE IT BRISK!

All walking is good exercise but brisk is best, especially for your heart and lungs. Imagine you’re hurrying to a meeting. You’re walking briskly when:

- ▶ your heart beats faster than normal but without racing.
- ▶ your breathing is deeper than normal but you can still talk while you walk.
- ▶ you feel a warm glow.

You may find it easier to start your walk at an easy pace and build up to a brisk one, slowing down to an easy pace again at the end.

HOW MUCH WALKING?

For general good health adults should walk at least 30 minutes a day on at least five days a week. Children should walk at least 60 minutes a day, every day. You can split the walking into two or three shorter sessions. But it’s important that you exercise regularly, on most days a week. The more you do, the more you benefit.

Other kinds of moderate exercise also count towards the total – for example gardening, energetic housework, swimming, cycling or outdoor play.

If you’re trying to lose weight aim to do more – at least an hour a day for adults. Healthy eating is also important – you can get more information from your GP on this. Keep walking to keep off the weight you lose.

WHAT ABOUT STEP COUNTERS?

Step counters (sometimes called pedometers or Step-O-Meters) clip to your belt and count your steps. Simple models are often given away free as part of health promotion schemes, or you can buy them from sports and outdoor shops. Some people find they’re a good way of keeping track of their exercise, but others find recording exercise time easier.

You may be told you should aim to do 10,000 steps a day. If you did all these in one go you’d have to walk about five miles (8km)! But every step you take counts towards the total, including wandering about at home and at work, so you should wear the step counter all day, not just when you go for a walk.

If you find it hard to meet the 10,000 steps target, remember every bit counts. If you walked an average of 5,000 steps a day when you started but are now walking 7,000 steps a day, you know you’re making progress.



“Walking helped me make new friends.”

Older walker, Sheffield

“I didn’t think I’d enjoy walking, but I took my young son, and now I just can’t stop thinking of ideas for places for us to walk to.”

Father, Birmingham



Getting out on regular walks won’t only make your children healthier and happier in the short term: it could also establish good habits for later life. You’ll find it’s a great way to spend quality time with your children as you can talk and explore together.

MAKING WALKING FUN FOR KIDS

- ▶ Don’t suggest “going for a walk” – instead make it an outing or adventure to somewhere they’ll like, such as a park, a playground, woods or a pond, a friend’s house, the shops...
- ▶ Make it a treat – take things to eat and drink or even a picnic.
- ▶ Don’t make it too long and hard.
- ▶ Be prepared to go at their pace, and to cut the walk short if they get tired.
- ▶ Make sure they have comfortable clothes and shoes, and carry extra layers for them.
- ▶ Remember hats and sun cream, and take something for bites and stings.
- ▶ Give them a small rucksack to pack and carry.
- ▶ Let them take a friend.
- ▶ Make it a treasure hunt or an I-Spy game.
- ▶ Find out if there’s a Ramblers family walking group in your area and make new friends (see inside back cover).
- ▶ Get them walking to school – see www.walktoschool.org.uk for more advice.

“When you’re walking you notice the flowers in the streets.”

Younger walker, East London

WALKS WITH CHILD APPEAL

Kids like places with lots of things to look at and places to clamber over – dunes, trees, water and beaches (though be careful close to deep, unprotected water), unusual and odd buildings, transport like trains and boats, animals (farms, zoos, woods, duckponds), famous landmarks and places connected to other things that interest them, like films, TV, pop music, books and sport. They’re usually less interested in straight and flat paths, landscapes and views.





“Walking is motivation, self-empowerment and a happiness pill.”

Older walker, Birmingham

GET MORE HELP...

If there's a Get Walking Keep Walking project nearby, you can follow our 12-week plan with the help of FREE led walks and activities and detailed local information. See www.getwalking.org.uk for details.

You can also register for a **FREE** DIY pack with a log book to keep track of your progress, and more information and advice. Visit www.getwalking.org.uk or call 020 7339 8500.

For information about good places to walk, try:

- ▶ The local library – a good source of books, leaflets and maps.
- ▶ Local information centres. Remember Tourist Information Centres aren't just for tourists.
- ▶ The local council, including their website. Ask for parks and recreation or the walking officer.
- ▶ Or get yourself a street atlas and simply explore away from main roads – you'll be surprised at what you find.

Health walks with trained leaders now take place all over Britain. Ask at libraries or GPs' surgeries or contact:

- ▶ Walking the Way to Health (England), ☎ 01242 533258, www.whi.org.uk
- ▶ Walking the Way to Health (Wales), ☎ 0845 130 6229, www.ww2h.org.uk
- ▶ Paths to Health (Scotland), ☎ 01259 218855, www.pathstohealth.org.uk

Other led walks are run by councils, wildlife groups, organisations like the Ramblers and local walking clubs. Some of these are more challenging walks but others are shorter and may be suitable for family walking. Ask in libraries or information centres, and see www.ramblers.org.uk/firststeps for details of Ramblers' easier walks.

For a large print version of this booklet, please contact us on 020 7339 8500 or email getwalking@ramblers.org.uk

SHARE OUR LOVE OF WALKING...

This booklet is published by the Ramblers' Association, Britain's biggest walking charity, as part of a project to encourage more everyday healthy walking in inner cities. We've been working for over 70 years to promote walking and to improve conditions for everyone who walks in England, Scotland and Wales.

As well as promoting walking for health, well-being and pleasure, we work to protect the footpath network, to increase access rights for walkers, and to protect the countryside and green spaces. Britain would be a much less walker-friendly place without us.

By joining us you'll not only be supporting our work, but you'll also be able to enjoy a great package of benefits including:

- ▶ Led walks – around 500 every week across the country – including walking groups for people in their 20s and 30s.
- ▶ Discretionary discounts at many outdoor stores – including 10% off at Millets and Blacks.
- ▶ Our award-winning quarterly magazine **walk**.
- ▶ Our annual handbook **walk BRITAIN** packed with essential information.

Join today by calling 020 7339 8500 and quoting GWKW or visiting www.ramblers.org.uk/join



Compiled by Des de Moor, with acknowledgements to Fred Agbah, Rebecca Barnham, Nick Cavill, Dan French, Simon Waters and Charlotte Williams. Designed by Turnbull Ripley. First published September 2007. GWKWB-1.1.

Photographs: Fred Agbah (p6 left, p13); Rebecca Barnham (p12); Tony Carney (p15); Louise Hillyer (p4); Richard Mann (front cover below, p2, p6-7 main, p8-9); Tina Stallard/ Natural England (p5); Phillip Waterman (p10); Simon Waters (front cover above, p11, back cover); Caroline Watson (p14).

© Copyright The Ramblers' Association 2007. All rights reserved. Registered charity number 1093577.

CONTACT US:

The Ramblers' Association
2nd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TW
Tel: 020 7339 8500
Email: ramblers@ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers Scotland
Tel 01577 861222
Email scotland@ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers Wales
Tel 020 2064 4308
Email cerddwyr@ramblers.org.uk

www.ramblers.org.uk



WALKING WORKS WONDERS!

Walking is an excellent natural exercise that can help you stay healthy and live longer, control your weight, keep happy, enjoy time with friends and family, learn more about your local area and even look after the environment.

And the best news is – almost everyone can do it, anywhere and at any time, for free! You don't need special clothing, equipment or training, it's easy to fit in with daily life, and it's natural and easy on your body. Even if you're unfit, you can start slowly and build up gradually.

This booklet tells you how you can start to enjoy the benefits of doing more walking, including:

- ▶ **AN EASY 12-WEEK WALKING PLAN TO GET YOU STARTED**
- ▶ **PRACTICAL ADVICE**
- ▶ **REASONS TO WALK, FACTS AND FIGURES AND TRUE LIFE STORIES TO GET YOU MOTIVATED**
- ▶ **ADVICE ON GETTING CHILDREN WALKING**

So why not pick up a copy and get walking today?



When you have finished with this booklet, please recycle it or pass it on to someone else.



www.getwalking.org.uk