

# Walking

The Activity of a Lifetime





## STEP it **UP**

There are almost as many reasons to walk as there are people who walk. People walk for pleasure, to stay in shape or manage their weight. Families explore the outdoors by walking together. Some people use walking as therapy for injured muscles or troubled feelings. People walk to explore, take a break, find adventure or get from here to there. Some Ontarians walk for companionship and improved well-being, including many who are 65 years of age and over. Others walk to raise awareness and money for charities and good causes.

Walking is also an enjoyable mode of transportation. Walk partway or all the way home from work or school. Walk to the store or on other errands. The more you walk, the more reasons you'll find to make walking part of your daily routine.

It's easy to take the first step and to increase the number of steps you take each day.

- Take the stairs, instead of using an elevator or escalator.
- Walk around the block or building at break time or lunch time.
- Walk a dog (borrow your neighbour's if you don't have one).
- Go for a walk after dinner and include all family members.



# Benefits of *Walking*

Walking is one of the simplest and most natural forms of exercise, and can become part of your daily routine more easily than any other activity. Research shows that walking briskly for at least 30 minutes a day, or a minimum of 150 minutes per week, can improve your overall fitness, health and mental well-being.

- Walking refreshes the mind, reduces fatigue and increases energy.
- More than half the body's muscles are designed for walking; it is a natural movement that is virtually injury-free.
- Walking provides an enjoyable time for sharing and socializing with friends or family.
- Regular, brisk walking can reduce elevated blood fats or blood pressure and improve digestion and elimination.
- Walking strengthens bones and helps prevent or control osteoporosis (a condition where bones become brittle and fragile).
- Walking relieves stress and tension.
- Regular walking will help you maintain a healthy weight and a positive body image, especially when combined with healthy eating.
- Brisk walking trains your heart, lungs and muscles to work more efficiently.

Be active, eat well and feel good about yourself.



# Stepping *Out*

**A LITTLE WALKING EVERY DAY** is far better than the occasional weekend bout of frenzied activity. Set yourself a goal to walk briskly (moderate intensity) for at least 30 minutes (approximately 2000-4000 steps) each day.

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for adults (18-64 years) and older adults (65 years and older) recommend at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week which can be done in sessions of 10 minutes or more to achieve health benefits. More physical activity will achieve greater health benefits. (See new Guidelines enclosed in package).

**EXPLORE A VARIETY OF ROUTES** and choose ones that are interesting, safe and convenient. Avoid heavy traffic, loose dogs and rough terrain.

**WALKING WITH OTHERS** can be more motivating than walking alone. Why not join a walking club (phone your local Y, municipal recreation department or public health unit to find a group) or ask a neighbour or family member to join you.

**WALK SAFELY.** Don't wear headphones in downtown traffic or in areas where you need to be constantly alert. At night, walk with a friend, and wear reflective tape on your clothing. Carry identification and a cell phone (or change for a phone call).

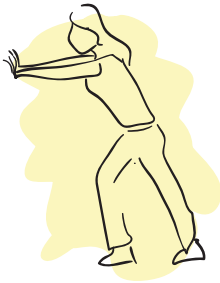
**ON SUMMER EVENINGS OR IN THE WOODS,** protect yourself from insect bites by wearing long sleeves and mosquito repellent.

**WHEN IT IS HOT,** choose a shaded route and walk a little slower than usual. Drink some cool water before you leave and carry water in a fanny pack if there is no water fountain en route. Avoid the hot noon day sun. Wear a hat and sunscreen.

**WHEN IT IS COLD,** avoid icy surfaces and walk in places where you are shielded from the wind. Many Ontarians prefer to "mall" walk at a local shopping centre in cold weather. Look for signs about walking clubs at your local mall.

**DRESS** in loose, comfortable clothing made of soft fabrics such as cotton, wool or breathable nylon. In cold weather be aware of the wind-chill factor. Dress in layers so you can peel off or put on according to how warm you feel. Wear mittens and a toque to cover your head and ears.

# Getting **Started**



## **CALF MUSCLES STRETCH**

Stand facing a wall. Position your forward foot approximately 12 – 15 inches (30 – 38 cm) from the wall. Stretch your arms forward, elbows straight and lean against the wall. Place your other foot a few inches behind (and to the side of) the front foot and slowly plant it flat on the floor. Lean forward until you feel a stretch in your back leg. Hold for 15 – 30 seconds.

Relax and repeat 2 times with alternate legs.

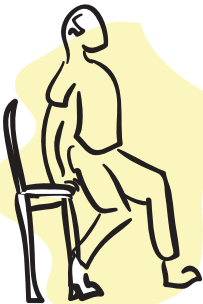
## **HAMSTRING MUSCLES STRETCH**

Sitting on the floor, put one leg straight out and the other leg bent at the knee. Keeping your back straight, lean forward, sliding your hands down the straight leg until you feel a stretch. Hold for 15 – 30 seconds. Relax and repeat 2 more times with alternate legs



## **THIGH STRETCH SITTING**

Sit on the edge of a chair. Lower your knee toward the floor and press it back under the chair. Hold the stretch for 15 – 20 seconds. Repeat each leg 2 times.





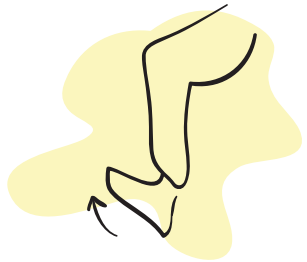
## **ALTERNATE**

### **THIGH MUSCLES STRETCH**

Stand close to a wall and place one hand on it. With the other hand reach back and hold the same side foot in that hand. When balanced, begin to slowly raise the foot up towards the lower back. Hold for 15 – 30 seconds. Relax and repeat 2 more times with alternate legs.

### **ACHILLES STRETCH**

Sitting on a chair, plant one heel on the floor and gently lift your toes up and back as far as you can. Hold for a count of 5, then relax. Repeat each foot several times.



## **WALKING SHOES**

When you walk, your feet hit the ground more than 650 times each km, so comfortable socks and well-designed walking or jogging shoes are a must. Shop for walking shoes at the end of the day, when your feet are larger. Try on both shoes and walk around in the store before buying them.

# Count Your Steps to Better Health



**How many steps do you take in a day?** The average sedentary North American accumulates about 3,500-5,000 steps during the course of their day. Dr. Catrine Tudor-Locke, a researcher at Arizona State University East suggests that, in general, to improve your health a person should add 2,000-3,000 more steps to their day than they get from their general activities. Here is a useful guide developed by Dr. Tudor-Locke:

- Less than 5,000 steps a day means you are not getting enough physical activity;
- 5,000–7,499 steps a day is about average for most people, but is not enough to enjoy all the health benefits of walking;
- 7,500–9,999 steps a day is moving in the right direction and puts you in the “somewhat active” category;
- More than 10,000 steps a day is a good target and puts you in the “active” category;
- More than 12,500 steps a day puts you in the “highly active” category and ensures you are enjoying many health benefits.

You can accumulate steps throughout the day. It only takes about 5 minutes to get in 500 steps, so doing simple things like parking farther away from a store entrance increases your daily count. Combining this with continuous walking (see the sample program in this booklet) will improve your health and fitness, and help you maintain a healthy weight.



It's as easy as one, two, three!

## **1 USE A PEDOMETER**

A pedometer is a small battery-powered device that displays on a screen the number of steps you take. They are sold in many sporting goods and department stores and range in quality and features. They are also available for borrowing from many public libraries. Clip your pedometer onto your waistband or belt. It should be snug on your hip and lined up above your knee. Set the counter to zero and walk 20 steps. Check to see that it accurately records the number of steps.

## **2 SET YOUR DAILY STEP GOAL**

Recommended daily step goals depend on your age and current level of physical activity. They also depend on how active you want to be. You can use the chart below to help you decide on a personal goal. But the best way to get there is to gradually increase the number of steps you take each day.

- Find your baseline. Clip on your pedometer and set it to zero. Go about your daily routine and record the number of steps you have taken at the end of the day. Do this for seven days. At the end of the week, calculate your daily average by dividing the total number of steps for the entire week by 7. This is your baseline.
- Increase your number of daily steps by 500 steps each week.
- Once you reach your goal, reward yourself and brag to all your friends and family members! Then make a commitment to keep it up.

## **3 KEEP A WEEKLY WALKING LOG**

Copy the Weekly Step Log in this booklet. Use it to record your baseline and your progress over the weeks ahead. If you don't have a pedometer make a commitment to walk a minimum of 30 minutes every day.

## DAILY STEP GOALS

Highly active ..... 10,000–16,000  
(children, youth and fit adults)

Active (adults) ..... 10,000

Somewhat active (older adults) ..... 7,000-9,999

Low active ..... 4,000-7,000  
(adults with a chronic health condition\*)

\*Check with your doctor before starting this program if you have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes or heart disease.

# Ready, Set, **Walk!**

You can design your own walking program by gradually increasing the frequency, time and distance you walk, or you can use the sample program given here.

- If you decide to try the sample walking program, begin by choosing the level that best matches your current experience with physical activity.
- Walk briskly at a pace you can maintain comfortably for the duration of your walk. Slow down if you are unable to talk and stop if you experience dizziness, pain or shortness of breath.
- Create your own stride – your body will automatically pick the most effective stride for any given speed. Breathe normally and let your arms swing naturally.
- If weight loss is your goal, aim to increase to a 60 - 90 minute walk at a moderate pace 5 to 7 times a week. Distance and regularity are the keys to burning calories.

# Increasing the Intensity of Your Walk!

Here are four ways to further increase the intensity of your walking program.

## **SPEED WALKING**

Breathe normally and pump your arms vigorously as you speed up your pace. Practice over short distances until you can walk comfortably at a vigorous pace of 7 to 9 km per hour.

## **CLIMB WALKING**

Climbing hills or stairs is the most vigorous form of walking. Climbing puts extra strain on the stomach, buttocks, lower back and leg muscles, so add some exercises for these muscles and additional stretches to your warm-up. Increase your hill work gradually.

## **WATER WALKING**

Walking in the water increases the difficulty because you move against the resistance of the water. Water walking is easy on the joints and refreshingly cool in hot weather.

## **HOLIDAY WALKING**

Enjoy a walking holiday on the Cross-Canada Trail or explore a different country on a holiday walking tour.

## **THESE FEET WERE MADE FOR WALKING**

With its natural pleasures, its range of benefits and its variety of opportunities, walking occupies a special place in the world of active living. Some 69% of Canadians rank walking at the top of the list of most popular activities. Now it's your turn to put your best foot forward. Enjoy!

## Sample Walking Program

	Warm Up	Activity	Cool Down	Total Time
Week 1	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 5 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	15 mins
Week 2	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 7 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	17 mins
Week 3	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 9 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	19 mins
Week 4	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 11 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	21 mins
Week 5	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 13 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	23 mins
Week 6	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 15 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	25 mins
Week 7	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 18 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	28 mins
Week 8	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 20 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	30 mins
Week 9	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 23 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	33 mins
Week 10	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 26 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	36 mins
Week 11	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 28 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	38 mins
Week 12 and beyond	Walk slowly 5 mins	Walk briskly 30 mins	Walk slowly 5 mins	40 mins

Continue with at least three walking sessions during each week of the program

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Daily Step/ Time Goal										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Daily Avg *Weekly total divided by 7										



## Did You Walk Your 10,000 Steps Today?

**Count Your Steps....To Better Health** is a pedometer lending program at all municipal public libraries in Halton Region. Its aim is to improve the health of all residents in Halton by encouraging them to be more physically active by walking with a pedometer. Pedometers are an easy-to-use device that motivates individuals to be more active by monitoring the number of steps taken each day. By walking 10,000 steps per day, adults will improve their health and maintain a healthy weight. Visit **[www.halton.ca/countyoursteps](http://www.halton.ca/countyoursteps)** to learn more.

It is also important to include activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least two days per week. For more information about physical activity, please visit **[www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca)**

## Community Supports for Physical Activity



Community groups such as Active Halton play an important role in promoting active living for all ages. A network for individuals and organizations, Active Halton has an ambitious plan to increase the physical activity levels of Halton residents by 20 per cent by 2012. They accomplish their goals through advocacy, coordinated promotional activities, and developing physical activity tools and resources for the Halton community.

Visit **[www.activehalton.ca](http://www.activehalton.ca)** for more information.

# Count Steps

YOUR

...To Better Health



For more information, please contact

**Halton Region**

Dial 311 or 905-825-6000

Toll Free 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

TTY 905-827-9833

**[www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca)**



Original artwork provided courtesy of the Town of Oakville.

Adapted from the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport resource, "Walking the Activity of a Lifetime, 2005" and its 2011 update "Go the Extra Mile."