

Walking Tips for Older Adults

Walking is the most popular form of exercise among older adults and it's a great choice.

What can walking do for you?

- strengthen muscles
- help prevent weight gain
- lower risks of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and osteoporosis
- improve balance
- lower the likelihood of falling

If it's been a long time since you exercised, you may want to start out slowly. You can start with just 5 minutes and build up to the recommended 30 minutes a day. Your goal should be to get up to taking 100 steps a minute. Remember, the most important thing is to just get started.

Take These Steps to Get Walking

JOIN A WALKING PROGRAM OR WALK WITH A BUDDY

Chances are you'll stick with a walking program if you have someone to walk with. Some shopping malls or town parks may have these programs. The National Institute on Aging's Go4Life campaign has many resources for walking and other kinds of physical activity (type "Go4Life" in your search engine to find the website).

WEAR THE RIGHT SHOES

Comfortable sneakers work well for most people. If you have foot problems, you may want to look into orthopedic shoes or talk to your healthcare provider about how you can continue your walking program.

DON'T LET A CANE OR WALKER STOP YOU

It's OK to use your cane or walker if you already have one. These can improve your balance and help take the load off painful joints.

AIM FOR THE RIGHT PACE

Try to walk as fast as you can, but still be able to chat with a friend while walking. Aim to work as hard as you do when you climb up the stairs.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS

Tell your healthcare provider if you have any pain or problems walking. Otherwise, don't let a health problem keep you from getting started. You may feel a little stiff and achy as you start walking, but many people feel better once they start moving!

3 Tips for Safe Walking

1. Be Aware of Your Surroundings

Plan to walk during the daytime or in well-lit areas in the evenings. Keep an eye out for uneven surfaces, possible obstacles, and other tripping hazards.

2. Keep Hydrated

Bring a bottle of water (or other liquid) with you and be sure to drink plenty of fluids on your walk.

3. Dress Properly for the Weather

If walking outside, wear layers of clothing so that you can take off layers if you're hot, or put more on if too cold.