**The Importance of Walking**

**Walking Today: The Problem**

The daily walking rate among both American teens and adults is currently are on average less than in previous years.

* Among students living within 1 mile of school, the percentage of walkers fell from 90% to 31% between 1969 and 2001.
* According to the CDC, only 13% of children walk to school today compared with 66% in 1970.
* Only 21% to 34% of U.S. adults meet public health recommendations (5 times per week for at least 30 minutes) for physical activity by walking.

**Walking as an Exercise: Is Walking Really a Workout?**

Surprisingly brisk walking can be almost as challenging as jogging. When you walk at speeds faster than 3.1 mph, your stride length naturally increases. Research shows that at maximal levels of effort, oxygen consumption – a key factor in cardiorespiratory fitness – is only slightly lower for race-walkers than it is for runners. At moderate-intense levels of exercise, oxygen consumption levels between race walkers and runners are almost equal.

**Why Choose Walking?**

Walking is the easiest form of exercise to stay fit. It is convenient because it can be done almost anywhere and anytime, whether you’re walking to class or down the street.

Walking is exercise but can also be used as a social event, going with a family member or friend, or can be done alone and become a time of reflection.

It is safe for all ages. This is because in comparison to other exercise methods, walking puts less strain to the lower back and creates less stress on your joints such as your hips, knees, ankles. It is also more grounded and balanced.

Walking is available to anyone. It is an exercise that doesn’t require expensive equipment or the use of a gym.

**The Benefits to Walking:**

Increasing your daily walking is directly related to your mental and physical well-being.

Physical Benefits:

* Aids in [weight loss](http://www.medindia.net/patients/lifestyleandwellness/walking-as-an-exercise.htm); burns body fat
* Strengthens bones; reduces risks of bone fracture and lessens severity of [osteoporosis](http://www.medindia.net/patients/lifestyleandwellness/walking-as-an-exercise.htm)
* Prevents type two diabetes
* Strengthens heart and its improves efficiency
* Improves overall fitness
* Lowers blood pressure; reduces cholesterol levels
* Increases high-density lipoprotein
* Improves efficiency of lungs
* Raises metabolism even while you rest
* Helps control appetite
* Increases energy
* Slows [aging](http://www.selfgrowth.com/aging.html)
* Reduces risk of colorectal, prostrate, and breast cancer
* Aids rehabilitation from heart attack and stroke
* Promotes intestinal regularity
* Strengthens legs, hips, and torso muscles
* Reduces stiffness in joints due to inactivity or [arthritis](http://www.selfgrowth.com/arthritis_treatment.html)
* Relieves most cases of chronic backache
* Improves flexibility and posture
* Promotes healthier skin due to increased circulation

Mental Benefits:

* Helps alleviate and prevent depression
* Improves several cognitive functions
* Improves mental alertness and memory
* Aids intellectual [creativity](http://www.selfgrowth.com/creativity.html) and problem solving
* Elevates mood
* Improves [self-esteem](http://www.selfgrowth.com/esteem.html)
* Helps relieve stress
* Relieves sleep apnea and insomnia.

**The Statistics of Walking: Did You Know?**

Being consistent in your walking [exercise](http://www.selfgrowth.com/equipment.html) routine is one of the most important factors in developing a healthy physical activity program.

* People who walk approximately 20-25 miles per week outlive those who don't by several years.
* On average, every minute of [walking](http://www.selfgrowth.com/walking.html) can extend your life by 1.5 to 2 minutes.
* Walking 20 extra minutes daily will on average burn off 7 pounds of body fat per year.
* Longer, moderately-paced daily walks (40 minutes at 60% to 65% maximum heart rate) are best for losing weight.
* Shorter, faster walks (20-25 minutes at 75% to 85% maximum heart rate) are best for conditioning your heart and lungs.
* Walking burns off around 5 to 8 percent of protein, 70 percent of carbohydrates and 15 percent of fat.
* Walking 150 minutes per week and losing just 7% of your body weight (12-15 pounds) can reduce your risk of diabetes by 58%.
* In a study on walking and cognitive function, researchers found that women who walked the equivalent of an easy pace at least 1.5 hours per week had significantly better cognitive function and less cognitive decline than women who walked less than 40 minutes per week.
* Mortality rates among retired [men](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=9512) who walk less than one mile per day are twice that among those who walk at least two miles daily.
* [Women](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=8899) in the Nurse's Health Study (72,488 female nurses) who walked three hours or more per week reduced their risk of a [heart attack](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=379) or other coronary event by 35% compared with women who did not.
* Women who brisk walked from one hour and 15 minutes to 2.5 hours per week had an 18% decreased risk of [breast cancer](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=298) compared with inactive women.
* Walking for 30 minutes, 3 - 5 times per week for 12 weeks reduced symptoms of [depression](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=342) by 47%.

**Why is Walking Good for College Students?**

Students who walk are likely to be more productive and are apt to better handle stress.

Ex. 10,000 Step Challenge Case:

Study:

* The Body-Brain Performance Institute conducted a study on 40 employees belonging to a global software company.
* The group was required to take 10,000 steps a day. (On average office worker takes only around 2000 to 3000 steps every day.)
* After eight weeks, the measurable components of the subjects were analyzed. This included--brain function, alertness, energy levels, their ability to plan, remember, simulate future scenarios and decision making ability.

Result:

* The study proved an association between vigorous physical activity and an increased brain function and reduced stress levels at work.
* The group who took 10000 steps daily showed a 2% improvement in their fitness level and brain function.
* The study also revealed that a person’s bio-age (a number assigned in accordance to health and fitness) increased by five years, while the brain activity increased by 4%.

Conclusion:

* Walking boosts productivity, improves brain function, decreases stress, and increases overall happiness.

Ex. Walking Enhances Brain Function Case:

Study:

* Researchers were interested in the effects of fitness on connectivity of brain networks, so they studied 65 adults, aged 59 to 80, as well as 32 younger adults.
* The study looked at activity in brain regions that function together as networks because the brain works like a circuit. Typically these networks become less connected as we get older.
* At the end of the year, the connectivity of several brain networks was significantly improved in the brains of the older walkers. These networks included one which aids in the performance of complex tasks. This was proven when they did significantly better on cognitive tests given afterwards.

Result:

* Researchers found that moderate walking three times per week for a year increased brain connectivity and brain function in older adults.

Conclusion:

* Even moderate exercise - like walking - can enhance the connectivity of important brain circuits, combat declines in brain function associated with aging and increase performance on cognitive tasks.

**Become a Part of the Walking World: What Can You Do?**

Start by joining a local walking group.

Find friends or family members to walk with.

Integrate simple extra walking to your daily activities – take a walk while on the phone or walk to nearby friend’s house instead of driving.

Set aside time for yourself to walk for 30 minutes each day. Walking just three times a week for 30 minutes can significantly increase cardiorespiratory fitness.

Create an affective walking goal: [10,000 steps per day](http://www.thewalkingsite.com/10000steps.html) is a great way to add fitness to your life.

Resources:

* Medicinenet.com
* [http://americawalks.org](http://americawalks.org/)
* Selfgrowth.com
* <http://www.medindia.net/news/healthwatch/10000-Steps-to-Make-Boss-Happy-91122-1.htm#ixzz1ZLwK8wiT>
* http://www.medindia.net/news/healthwatch/10000-Steps-to-Make-Boss-Happy-91122-1.htm#ixzz1ZLwK8wiT