

Southport Physiotherapy Centre

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Walking For Good Health

Walking is low impact, requires minimal equipment, can be done at any time of the day and can be performed at your own pace.

The benefits can include an increase in cardiovascular and pulmonary fitness, reduce risk of heart disease and stroke, improve management of conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain and stiffness and diabetes. It can also strengthen bone and improve balance, increase muscle strength and endurance and reduce body fat.

Aim to walk for 30 minutes a day at a pace that you can still talk but not sing.

If it is too difficult to walk for 30 minutes at one time, do regular small bursts, like 10 minutes, 3 times a day.

If you are aiming to lose weight you will need to exercise for longer.

Try and incorporate it into your daily activities – take the stairs instead of the lift for at least part of the way, get off public transport one stop earlier, walk to and from work, include housework, walk – (don't drive) to the local shops, walk the dog or the neighbour's dog.

Walk in the morning if you can (any time of day is good if that is what is easiest for you).

Walking before breakfast is good because after the overnight fast your body has lower reserves of blood glucose, which is its preferred source of energy for physical activity.

This means you use up more fat if you exercise before you eat than if you exercise after you've eaten. However the same amount of energy is used no matter which time of day you walk so do what is most convenient for you.

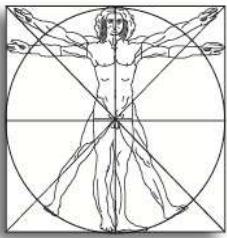
Wear a pedometer.

This can be useful for motivation. It is suggested that 10,000 steps a day can provide good physical benefits.

Plan to cover a set distance each day, monitor how long it takes you to walk this distance. As your fitness improves, you will be able to walk for longer distance in less time and expend more energy. Walking fast burns more kilojoules than walking slowly but this doesn't mean you have to push yourself until you're breathless.

The body has a tendency to get accustomed to physical activity so continue to increase your intensity over subsequent sessions and thus improve your fitness levels.

Ways of increasing intensity: Walking with hand weights, increasing your walking speed, increasing your distance, increasing your time.



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The best way to warm up is to walk slowly.

Afterwards gently stretch, don't bounce.

Walking is low cost and an effective form of exercise, however the wrong type of shoe or walking action can cause foot or shin pain and blisters.

Make sure the shoes are comfortable.

Whenever possible walk on grass rather than concrete to minimise impact.

Wear loose comfortable clothing.

Protect yourself from the sun with a hat, sunglasses, sunblock.

Drink plenty of fluids, take a drink with you.

Vary your walking route so you can enjoy the change of scenery.

Walk with a friend, and combine exercise and socialising.

Join a local walking club.

Remember movement for health and fitness should be carried out every day.