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The blu-3 guide TO walking

Reasons why walking is good for you



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Walking can offer numerous health benefits to people of all ages and fitness levels. It may also help prevent certain diseases and even prolong your life.

Walking is free to do and easy to fit into your daily routine. All you need to start walking is a sturdy pair of walking shoes.



read on to learn about some of the benefits of walking.

Burn calories

Walking can help you burn calories. Burning calories can help you maintain or **lose weight**. Your actual **calorie burn** will depend on several factors, including:

- ▶ walking speed
- ▶ distance covered
- ▶ terrain (you'll burn more calories walking uphill than you'll burn on a flat surface)
- ▶ your weight

You can determine your actual calorie burn through a **calorie calculator**. For a general estimate, you can also refer to **this chart**.

Strengthen the heart

Walking at least **30 minutes. Trusted Source** a day, five days a week can reduce your risk for **coronary heart disease** by about **19 percent**. And your risk may reduce even more when you increase the duration or distance you walk per day.

Can help lower your blood sugar

Taking a short walk after eating may help lower your blood sugar.

A **small study** found that taking a 15-minute walk three times a day (after breakfast, lunch, and dinner) improved blood sugar levels more than taking a 45-minute walk at another point during the day.

More research is needed to confirm these findings, though.

Consider making a post-meal walk a regular part of your routine. It can also help you fit exercise in throughout the day.

Eases joint pain

Walking can help protect the joints, including your knees and hips. That's because it helps lubricate and strengthen the muscles that support the joints.

Walking may also provide benefits for people living with arthritis, such as reducing pain. And walking **5 to 6 miles** a week may also help prevent arthritis.

Boosts immune function

Walking may reduce your risk for developing a cold or the flu.

One study tracked 1,000 adults during flu season. Those who walked at a moderate pace for 30 to 45 minutes a day had 43 percent fewer sick days and fewer upper respiratory tract infections overall.

Their symptoms were also lessened if they did get sick. That was compared to adults in the study who were sedentary.

Try to get in a daily walk to experience these benefits. If you live in a cold climate, you can try to walk on a treadmill or around an indoor mall.

Boost your energy

Going for a walk when you're tired may be a **more effective** energy boost than grabbing a cup of coffee.

Walking increases oxygen flow through the body. It can also increase levels of cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine. Those are the hormones that help elevate energy levels.

Improve your mood

Walking can help your mental health. **StudiesTrusted Source** show it can help reduce anxiety, depression, and a negative mood. It can also boost self-esteem and reduce symptoms of social withdrawal.

To experience these benefits, aim for 30 minutes of brisk walking or other moderate intensity exercise three days a week. You can also break it up into three 10-minute walks.

Extend your life

Walking at a faster pace could extend your life. **Researchers** found that walking at an average pace compared to a slow pace resulted in a 20 percent reduced risk of overall death.

But walking at a brisk or fast pace (at least 4 miles per hour) reduced the risk by 24 percent. The study looked at the association of walking at a faster pace with factors like overall causes of death, cardiovascular disease, and death from cancer.

Tone your legs

Walking can strengthen the muscles in your legs. To build up more strength, walk in a hilly area or on a treadmill with an incline. Or find routes with stairs.

Also trade off walking with other cross-training activities like cycling or jogging. You can also perform resistance exercises like squats, lunges, and leg curls to further tone and strengthen your leg muscles.

Creative thinking

Walking may help clear your head and help you think creatively.

A **study** that included four experiments compared people trying to think of new ideas while they were walking or sitting. Researchers found participants did better while walking, particularly while walking outdoors.

The researchers concluded that walking opens up a free flow of ideas and is a simple way to increase creativity and get physical activity at the same time.

Try to initiate a walking meeting with your colleagues the next time you're stuck on a problem at work.





Tips for staying safe while walking

To ensure your safety while walking, follow these tips:

- ▶ Walk in areas designated for pedestrians. Look for well-lit areas if possible.
- ▶ If you walk in the evening or early morning hours, wear a reflective vest or light so cars can see you.
- ▶ Wear **sturdy shoes** with good heel and arch support.
- ▶ Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water before and after your walk to stay hydrated.
- ▶ Wear sunscreen to prevent sunburn, even on cloudy days.

How to get started

To get started walking, all you'll need is a pair of sturdy walking shoes. Choose a walking route near your home. Or look for a scenic place to walk in your area, such as a trail or on the beach.

You can also recruit a friend or family member to walk with you and hold you accountable. Alternatively, you can add walking into your daily routine.

Here are some ideas:

- ▶ If you commute, get off your bus or train one stop early and walk the rest of the way to work.
- ▶ Park farther away from your office than usual and walk to and from your car.
- ▶ Consider walking instead of driving when you run errands. You can complete your tasks and fit in exercise at the same time.

The takeaway

Walking can fulfill daily recommended exercise for people of all ages and fitness levels.

Consider getting a pedometer or other fitness tracker to keep track of your daily steps. **Here are some to check out.**

Choose a walking route and daily step goal that's appropriate for your age and fitness level.

Warm and cool down before walking to avoid injury. Always speak to your doctor before starting a new fitness routine.

Listen to music

Walking while listening to music or a podcast can take your mind off the effort.

It can also get you into a rhythm and help you walk faster. You'll be surprised at how fast the time goes when you're walking to your favourite tunes.

Use the Active 10 app

Active 10 allows you to track how much and how fast you have walked.

To keep things interesting, it gives you goals to work towards and rewards your progress.

Download Active 10 from the NHS website. <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active>

Or Map my walk

The Map My Walk app, which lets you map out your course and calculate your miles.

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