



CHECK YOUR HEALTH

The Physical Activity & Nutrition Newsletter For Utahns Today

Volume I

Utah: Walking Your Way to Better Health

Are you already walking? *Keep going!*
Are you thinking about starting a walking program? *Join the crowd!*

Walking is an easy, convenient, low cost way to become active and healthy. Simply lace up your shoes and walk out the door. This handout will explain why you should start walking and how to begin. Those who already walk will learn how your walking program helps your body and why you should keep it up.

Let's start walking, Utah!



Why Should I Start Walking?

Why walk? —Because it makes you feel good mentally and physically. It is easy and convenient when done correctly. Here is a list of what walking can do for you:

- Improve mood and attitude
- Boost self-esteem and energy
- Strengthen lungs and heart
- Relieve stress and tension
- Decrease depression and fatigue
- Increase muscle endurance
- Improve quality of sleep
- Reduce risk for diseases including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and some cancers when done regularly

There are many more benefits of regular walking. Choose a reason why you want to start then put it to the test. Stick with it, and you will see and feel a difference in your life. Tell your friends how walking can help them so that they can be more healthy too!

Safety First

- Take a dog along
- Carry a whistle
- Wear reflective gear/tape or light-colored clothing
- Carry a flashlight
- Wear a flashing light (such as those used on bikes)
- Remember to drink water
- Always tell someone where you're going
- Carry ID in case of an emergency
- Carry change or a cell phone for an emergency call
- Dress for the weather
- Carry a fanny pack with needed items
- Avoid walking alone at night
- Change your route frequently



Find out more at www.checkyourhealth.org or call the hotline at 1-888-222-2542.

Getting Started

Walking is low impact with high benefits. The wonderful thing about a walking program is that it is so convenient. You don't need to have a lot of gear or skills to do it. Start out on your own level by walking as fast or slow as you want. Walk where and when you want. To avoid injury begin gradually. Listen to your body. Slowly increase your distance over the weeks (no more than 10% per week). Walk a little further each time until you reach your distance goals. Then you can start to push a little harder for greater fitness. The American College of Sports Medicine suggests **exercising 3-5 days a week for 30-45 minutes each session** to benefit your heart and lungs. You should have a warm-up and a cool-down period of easy walking for 5-10 minutes at the beginning and the end of your exercise routine. Do some light stretches after your work out to prevent injury and to improve your flexibility. Most of all have fun!

Bored with walking?

- Join a pedometer-walking program. Exciting programs can be found online through which you can virtually walk across America or track your weekly distance to earn awards for your totals.
- Sign up for a race. Some races are to raise money for a good cause, and walking is a part of the fun.
- Take the scenic route. Change your course or drive somewhere new to walk.
- Serve your community and walk by taking a bag along to pick up trash.
- Improve your mind as you walk by listening to books and music on tape/CD. Public libraries have a great selection. Be safe and pay extra attention to dangers. You may not hear as well with headphones.

What You Need

1. Comfortable Shoes: wear a good pair of athletic shoes that will give you support.



2. Desire: if you want to, you will.

3. A Scheduled Time: you are more likely to walk if it is a set part of your daily routines with a special time set aside.

4. Partners: walking can be more fun with a friend. Plus, you will be more likely to stay with it.

5. Goal: goals push us to achieve more. Set your goal for time or distance. Make it hard enough that you have to work, but not so hard that you cannot do it.

6. Reward: after you have reached a goal, treat yourself to time doing a favorite hobby, such as reading or doing crafts, a low fat dessert, a massage, or any other reward that motivates you.

7. Commitment: in order to see the benefits of a walking program it should be done long term. Weekly exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle. Like brushing your teeth, it needs to be done for the rest of your life.

Want to know more?

American College of Sports Medicine: www.ascm.org

Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov

American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

Healthfinder: www.healthfinder.gov

President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports:

www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cgi-bin/pf.cgi-bin/pf.cgi

Medline Plus:

www.niddk.nih.gov/health/nutrit/walking/walkingbro/walking.htm

Utah Walks: www.utahwalks.org

American On the Move: www.AmericaOnTheMove.org

Before You Begin

Before beginning your walking program you should see a healthcare provider if you have any existing medical conditions or haven't been active before. If you have any pain, shortness of breath, fainting or other concerns when beginning your program you should **stop the activity immediately** and call your provider right away.