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# Walking

## How do I get started?

For beginners who are concerned about their motivation or ability to walk far, I recommend the "five minutes out, five minutes back" plan. Just like it sounds, you walk out for five minutes, turn around, and walk back. If you feel ambitious, you can start with 10 minutes out, 10 minutes back, and off you go about your day! Increase by two to three minutes per week and before you know it you'll be up to 30 minutes. It sounds too simple to be true, but this is a realistic and achievable way to get started, and if you follow it, you'll be walking plenty before you know it.

Consider power-walking if you want to increase your speed. Start with your normal walking pace for five to 10 minutes as a warm-up and then try your skill at power-walking. You'll be surprised how exhausting power-walking can be, so start with 10-15 minutes the first few times out and finish up your 30 minutes with your normal walking pace so you don't over do it.

## Interval training

Once you reach a baseline of 30 minutes of power-walking, you can speed up even more by training with intervals. Intervals are where you set up work to active rest ratios (work:active rest) to push your body and improve your cardiorespiratory fitness. Here's an example of how to do intervals.

1. Walk at your normal pace for three minutes, then
2. increase the speed for one minute, then
3. back to your normal speed for another three minutes, then
4. repeat this 1:3 interval cycling for your entire workout.
5. Over time, increase the work and decrease the active rest.

Here's an example of an interval training workout for someone who walks for 30 minutes at 3.5 mph.

1. Walk for 10 minutes at 3.5 mph, then
2. increase the speed to 3.8 mph for one minute, then
3. walk again for three minutes at 3.5 mph, then
4. walk again at 3.8 mph, and so on until you reach your time limit.
5. Increase the work part to one and a half minutes and decrease the active rest to two and a half minutes as you get more fit (you walk faster, your heart doesn't pump as hard, and your breathing is easier).

Your fitness will substantially improve after six to eight weeks if you continue with this type of training. You may even notice more endurance after just one or two sessions.

## **Stretching**

I suggest the following five simple stretches before and after you walk. Ease into each stretch until you feel the tension in the muscle you want to stretch and hold until it feels looser.

### **Calf stretch**

1. Stand at arms length and lean against a wall or fence.
2. Put one leg straight back and the other bent underneath you.
3. Keep back straight and lean hips forward.
4. Keep rear leg straight with heel on ground.
5. Repeat for other leg.

### **Side stretch**

1. Stand with both arms over head.
2. Lean to one side, then the other.
3. An alternative is to leave your right arm at your side and bend to the right while reaching your left arm reaches overhead, then reverse.

## **Torso twist**

1. Stand with both arms out to side with elbows slightly bent.
2. Feet should be at shoulder width or slightly wider.
3. Twist your torso to the right and then the left, alternating back and forth slowly.

## **Quadriceps (thigh)**

1. While leaning against a wall, reach back with your left hand and grab your right ankle.
2. Pull your foot back and away from your buttocks.
3. Repeat for other side.

## **Hamstrings (back of legs)**

1. Put your right leg out about 18 inches from your body with toe pointed up.
2. Bend your left leg slightly.
3. Reach down with both hands toward your right foot.
4. Repeat for other side.
5. Alternatively, you can sit down on the edge of your bed or a park bench with one leg up and the other on the floor and reach with both hands until you feel the stretch in the back of the leg.

## **Planning your walks**

I recommend setting a weekly plan for walking if you struggle with motivation or sticking with it. Planning increases compliance. Write down the day(s) of the week you'll walk, the time of day, how many minutes, and where you'll do it (location). Set and review your weekly plan every week for three months and then reevaluate at that time.