Put your heart into walking

British Heart Foundation
Welcome to a healthy heart and a more energetic you — the easy way! Your heart is the powerhouse of the body; it pushes oxygen and nutrient-rich blood to every cell that needs it. The heart is basically a muscle — but it’s the most important muscle we’ve got. And it needs exercise so that it can pump more blood with each beat and save you energy.

Exercise doesn’t have to mean exhausting runs, buying fancy equipment or joining an expensive health club. Walking gives your heart the workout it needs. All you need to do is build brisk walking into your daily routine.
Did you know?

Simply walking for 30 minutes, at least five times a week can make you feel fitter and healthier. It doesn't have to be in one session, break it down into two or three 10-15 minutes sessions.

What walking will do for you

Brisk walking is an ideal way to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. It can also reduce your risk of stroke, diabetes, osteoporosis and obesity, and gives you more energy to do the things you enjoy in life.
Walking:

- helps to reduce blood pressure. As we get older blood pressure tends to rise which can be very risky in later life. Walking helps keep your blood pressure down.

- studies have shown that people taking regular exercise have improved levels of the protective form of cholesterol called High Density Lipoprotein (HDL).

- tones up your muscles and strengthens your bones. Regular brisk walking also wards off osteoporosis – the unpleasant and often painful thinning of the bones experienced by many women after menopause.

- helps to control your weight. Being overweight can lead to raised blood pressure. Physical activity is at least as important as diet in keeping trim.
Did you know?

Studies have found that taking regular brisk walks can halve the risk of developing coronary heart disease.

Your easy walking action plan

Walking's a great way to get the exercise your heart needs. Walk regularly, and build up to it gradually. It may take around 8-12 weeks to start feeling the difference. But when you do, you'll know it's worth it.

Walk at slightly above your usual pace without it being uncomfortable. You should start to feel warmer. If you are not used to walking you could start by walking for ten minutes twice a day.

Your target is to build up gradually to 30 minutes. Maybe two fifteen minute walks or three ten minute walks (morning, lunch and evening) will help you to achieve 30 minutes of activity each day. We are less active at weekends therefore try to find time for a good walk on either Saturday or Sunday, preferably both days.

Consult your doctor first if you have heart disease or any concerns.
How can you fit 30 minutes a day into your daily routine?

Remember – 30 minutes represents only 2% of your day.

- The first step towards being more active is the most important one!
- Walk to the local shop instead of taking the bus or car
- Walk up and down stairs – it’s really good for the heart
- Avoid the lift or escalator – and avoid sitting for long periods by taking a break at least every half an hour
- Build a walk into your journey to work – try different routes to add variety
- Make activity part of your social life – go for a walk at lunchtime with colleagues instead of staying in at work; walk to the cinema or pub, or walk round to see friends
- Get off the bus a stop earlier and then walk
- Walk with the children to school and save the expense of driving
- Walk up hills as well as on the flat to increase the challenge
- Plan a walk with friends instead of just meeting for a chat; keeping each other company can keep you both motivated. Arrange regular walks so that they become a habit
- Involve the whole family – walking is good for children too and a great way of exploring the countryside.
Every Autumn the BHF organises fundraising walks all over the UK as part of our **Walkabout** scheme. Many of these walks are organised by volunteers and they can take place on beaches, mountains or through forests. If you would like further information about these walks or would like to organise one yourself please contact BHF Community Fundraising on 020 7487 9409, or email us at commfund@bhf.org.uk, or visit our website at bhf.org.uk.

**Walking the Way to Health Initiative (WHI)**

The British Heart Foundation and The Countryside Agency have joined forces to get more people walking in their local community – with benefits to their health and the local environment. We are helping people to choose, signpost and promote routes for walking – to organise guided walks for people who like walking in company; provide information about healthy walking, and to make the town and countryside more interesting and safe to walk in.