Put your heart into walking
It’s easy, it’s free, it’s great for your heart

Give your heart a workout
Feel better
Meet people
Fit for free

Beating heart disease together
Introduction

This booklet is suitable for anyone who wants to look after their health and be more active. It explains how walking can help you lower your risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and why that's important. It has information, tips and tools to help you build walking into your day.

Walking should be enjoyable, as well as being good for your health. You don't need to buy any special equipment or clothing to start walking more! It's all about making changes you can stick with, and build on, to keep your heart healthy.

Regular physical activity like walking can help many health problems. But if you do have a health problem, check with your doctor about the amount and type of activity that is right for you.

If you have a heart condition or you are at a higher risk of CHD - for example because you have high blood pressure - you should read our booklet *Physical activity and your heart*.

You will see throughout this booklet suggestions for further tools and information that will help you - page 30 explains how you can order resources from the BHF and you can also find more advice on our website [bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk).

If you are reading this as a pdf on your computer, you can click on the resources and tools suggested and it will link through to the webpage. The page numbers highlighted in the booklet are also linked so that you can move quickly and easily to other relevant sections.

This guide does not replace the advice your health professionals may give you based on their knowledge of your condition.
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Why should I walk?

Your heart is a muscle and it needs physical activity to stay in good condition. Regular walking can help to give your heart the workout it needs.

Being active helps reduce your risk of developing coronary heart disease. Walking can also help reduce your risk of stroke, Type 2 diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis.

And that’s not all. It can help you to:

- get a healthier body shape and appearance
- control your weight
- feel more energetic
- feel less stressed or anxious
- increase your self-confidence
- sleep more easily
- enjoy your surroundings
- meet people and make new friends
- save money
What is coronary heart disease?

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the single biggest killer in the UK. It begins when your coronary arteries – the arteries that supply your heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood – become blocked or narrowed because of a build-up of fatty deposits.

In time, your arteries may become so narrow that they cannot deliver enough oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle. This can cause angina. Angina is an uncomfortable feeling, tightness or pain in your chest which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach.

Sometimes the fatty deposits can become unstable, and a piece may break away causing a blood clot to form. If this blood clot blocks your coronary artery, part of your heart muscle will be starved of oxygen-rich blood and may become permanently damaged. This is a heart attack.

If you want to know more, read our booklets Heart attack (HIS7) and Angina (HIS6).

With our interactive learning tool, Know Your Heart, you can discover all the key facts about your heart with videos, games and quizzes. Go to bhf.org.uk/knowyourheart to find out more.
blood within the artery
Fatty deposits building up in the lining of the walls
Fatty deposits narrow the artery restricting blood flow to the heart
How much should I walk?

ACTIVE

EVERY

DAY
How much should I walk?

You should be active every day. Every 10 minutes counts.

Aim to build up to a total of 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week. Walking quickly is a good example of activity that gives your heart a good workout.

Fast fact
What are moderate intensity aerobic activities?
Moderate intensity aerobic activities make you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than usual, but you should still be able to carry on a conversation.

For information on other ways to get – and stay – active, read our booklet Get active, stay active (code G12).
How much do I walk already?

You might already be walking more than you realise. Think about how much brisk walking you did each day over the last week.

Try to remember what you did at different times of the day – morning, lunchtime, afternoon and evening – and how long you spent walking each time.

Use the diary opposite to write down any time you were walking for ten minutes or more.

With our online calculator, you can find out how many calories you’ve burned being active. Go to bhf.org.uk/calories to find out more.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Brisk walking</th>
<th>Minutes spent brisk walking</th>
<th>Total minutes spent brisk walking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example</td>
<td>1. Walked home from school</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Walked to shop</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Walked from shop</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly total</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Am I walking enough?

If you’re walking briskly every day and your total time is more than 150 minutes a week, well done. You’re already doing a great job.

Maybe you could try walking for longer to increase and maintain your fitness? It’s not just a way to get from A to B. Walking can also be a relaxing way to clear your mind, explore the city or countryside or just catch up with friends.

If you’re not walking that much, don’t worry. Find out how to put your heart into walking by reading on.
Make walking part of your daily routine

Your first step to being more active is the most important one. If you’re not used to walking regularly, start slowly and at a level that suits you.

There are lots of ways you can start to make walking part of your daily routine.

Why not start by

- getting off the bus a stop earlier and walking the rest of your journey
- walking up the stairs instead of getting the lift
- sitting down less – take regular breaks from sitting in front of a computer or TV by getting up and moving around.
Then try to

- plan a time each day for you to walk – use a diary or calendar if it helps
- build walking into your daily commute
- walk to the shops instead of driving or getting the bus
- make walking part of your social life
- involve the whole family so you can support each other
- walk your children to school.

Once you start being more active, you’ll have more energy and you’ll feel more relaxed.

Go to page two for a reminder on the benefits of walking.

For more information on the wider benefits of being active, read our booklet *Get active, stay active* (code G12).

**Myth buster**

**Being more active is good for your health now and can help protect you in the future too.**

Physical activity can help you avoid or manage a range of health conditions including coronary heart disease. It can also improve the way you look and feel.
Top tips for taking care when walking

To make sure your first steps into being active are enjoyable, you need to look after yourself. Make sure you:

1. don’t walk if you feel unwell or have a high temperature
2. avoid walking outdoors on your own at night
3. drink water before, during and after your walk – don’t wait until you’re thirsty
4. wear comfortable shoes and clothes that give you good support
5. start slowly and build up the pace of your walk gradually
6. practice using a healthy posture – head upright with your arms bent at the elbow and swinging as you walk
7. stop if you’re in pain, feel dizzy, get tired or feel unwell
8. slow down gradually before you stop
9. do some stretching exercises after your walk to help avoid muscle stiffness the next day.
Make walking part of your daily routine
Gradually walk further and faster

- Stroll ✓
- Ramble □
- Hike □
- Trek □
Gradually walk further and faster

Once you’ve got used to walking more regularly, you should build up the speed and distance that you walk.

Brisk walking is a great way of being active at a moderate intensity. It will make you feel warmer, breathe harder and make your heart beat faster than usual, but you should still be able to carry on a conversation.

Why not start walking quickly for a few minutes – on top of what you already do – a couple of days a week?

Once you feel comfortable with that, gradually lengthen your walk by adding a few more minutes each time. Or maybe you could walk a few more days each week.

You should aim to build up to a total of 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity each week.

For more information on moderate intensity activity, go to page seven.