Feel good
Reduce stress
Improve sleep
Increase energy
Reduce blood pressure
Keep your heart strong

Walking the way to Health
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Walking the way to Health (WHI) is the largest national body promoting and setting the standards for led health walks. It is a joint initiative between Natural England and the British Heart Foundation.

This publication was produced in consultation with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and it is designed in accordance with RNIB’s clear print guidelines.

Supported by

British Heart Foundation
Natural England

www.meridian.co.uk
Why walk?

Walking can...
- Make you feel good
- Give you more energy
- Reduce stress and help you sleep better
- Keep your heart ‘strong’ and reduce blood pressure
- Help to manage your weight

Why is walking the perfect activity for health?
- Almost everyone can do it
- You can do it anywhere and any time
- It’s a chance to make new friends
- It’s free and you don’t need special equipment
- You can start slowly and build up gently

How much walking do I need to do?

The current recommendation for physical activity is just 30 minutes a day of moderate activity, such as brisk walking. That’s all it takes to feel the difference.

You should aim at 30 minutes a day but you don’t have to do them all in one go to start with. You could walk for ten minutes three times a day or 15 minutes twice a day at first. The most important thing is that you start ‘where you’re at’ and build up gradually.

‘Brisk’ walking means walking so that you breathe a little faster, feel warmer and have a slightly faster heart beat. You should still be able to talk. If you can’t carry on a conversation then you’re going too fast!
Starting off
Week 1 Two walks of ten minutes on three days per week.
Week 2 and 3 Two walks of 12 minutes on four days per week.
Week 4 Two walks of 15 minutes on 4 days per week.

Getting going
Week 5 – 9 Two walks of 15 minutes per day on four days a week. Try to increase your pace slightly or include a route which has some inclines or low hills. Aim to go walking on 5 days per week.

Staying with it
Week 10 onwards Aim for a brisk pace and challenge yourself with steeper inclines or hills. Experts say that ‘brisk walking’ means doing a mile in 15 – 17 minutes, anything less is a stroll.

Picking up the pace
Start every walk slowly and gradually increase your pace. After about 5 minutes start to walk a little faster. At the end of the walk gradually slow down your pace. A cool down period is a great time to do stretches to improve your flexibility.

How should I feel?
Listen to your body when you walk – if you feel dizzy or develop pain or nausea, slow down or stop. If the problem persists see your doctor before walking again.

Remember – your aim is to steadily improve, rather than walking further or faster than someone else.

Getting started

What should I wear?
A good pair of shoes is the only equipment required – any shoes that are comfortable, provide good support and don’t cause blisters.
Loose fitting clothing allows you to move more freely. Wear thin layers rather than heavy, chunky clothing!
If it’s a hot day take a bottle of water, a sun hat and sun cream.

Make it a habit
The easiest way to walk more is to build it into your daily routine.

Think before you drive less than a mile – walk to the local shop or post box
Throw away the TV remote control
Get off the bus a stop earlier
Park the car further away at the supermarket
Take the stairs instead of the lift
Enjoy a walking lunch – walk to the park and eat your sandwiches
Borrow a friend’s dog and take it for a walk
Walk the children to school

Your walking plan

Try this plan to put walking into your life. If you can only walk for a couple of minutes to begin with and you need to rest that’s OK. Don’t overdo it on your first day. Where you have to start isn’t important – it’s where you’re going that counts!

Build walking into your daily routine

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Join a Walking the way to Health group

Walking in a group is a great way to start walking and to stay motivated. You’ll make friends and discover new places to walk in your neighbourhood.

Walking the way to Health has nearly 450 health walk groups across England. Our groups meet for regular short walks every week. Anyone can turn up and join in – it’s free and fun.

Your local group will support you every step of the way and provide:

- Led health walks for absolute beginners
- Trained walk leaders
- Other people to walk with
- A health questionnaire at the start of the walk
- Safe routes

Find your local Walking the way to Health group

To find your nearest health walk group on our website, enter your postcode into our Walk Finder at www.whi.org.uk/walkfinder

Alternatively, give our head office a ring on 01242 533337.

Here are some tips to help you to keep motivated…

- Do a regular walk with a friend
- Circle each day that you walk on your calendar
- Keep a diary – write down what you do and the route you took
- Leave your walking shoes by the door to remind you!
- Try to build walking into your daily life
- Establish a routine – go for a stroll with family or friends after dinner
- Take a look at how far you’ve come – is it easier now to climb the stairs?

Stick with it