Walk more... feel the difference

- Feel good
- Reduce stress
- Improve sleep
- Increase energy
- Reduce blood pressure
- Keep your heart strong
Why walk?

Walking can...
- Make you feel good
- Give you more energy
- Reduce stress and help you sleep better
- Keep your heart ‘strong’
- 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 for 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!
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
- 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

You don’t need special equipment to start walking
Build walking into your daily routine
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!

Starting off

**Week 1**  Two walks of 10 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 four 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 five 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 five 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.
Join a Walking for 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 for Health has over 530 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 for Health group

To find your nearest health walk group on our website, enter your postcode into our Walk Finder at www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk/walkfinder
Alternatively, give our head office a ring on 0300 060 2287.
Stick with it

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?

Walk4Life is part of the Change4Life movement. In order to maintain a healthy weight we need to both eat well and move more. Many families are making changes that will help them live healthier and longer. Search for Change4Life or call 0300 1234567 for more information.
Walking for Health (WfH) is the largest national body promoting and setting the standards for led health walks. It is a Natural England initiative.

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