

Simple Steps to Take More Steps

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Walking is a simple, cost effective, fun way to get fit and be healthy. It is a great way to gain the benefits of an active lifestyle including: maintenance of healthy body weight, decreased back pain, increased energy, decreased risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis, better stress management, and improved self esteem. Follow these 5 steps to get you started and walk your way to a happier and healthier life today!

1. Get a Pedometer

- *What is a pedometer?* A pedometer is a device that counts the number of steps you take in a day.
- *How does it work?* The pedometer is worn on your belt or on the waistband of your pants like a pager. It counts your steps by feeling the vibrations from your foot hitting the floor. Follow the directions included with your pedometer for set up.
- *Where can I get one?* Pedometers are becoming much more common – they can be bought at most sporting stores, and can even be found in some cereal boxes! Just consider that you generally get what you pay for.
- *How much do they cost?* You can get a good quality pedometer with the basic functions you need (how many steps you take is the only reading you really need) for approximately \$10-20. Omron and Timex both make good quality products.

2. Talk to your Doctor

Before you begin any new exercise program, please check with your doctor. To determine whether or not you are ready to start a program you may consider completing a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire or PAR-Q. These can be found online and will direct you to speak with your doctor if any concerns arise.

3. Determine your starting baseline

Start by finding out how many steps you are already taking in a day. Wear your pedometer for the entire day from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. Write down the number of steps you took. I recommend doing this for a whole week and taking an average. You may find that you are naturally more or less active on weekends than weekdays.

4. Set a weekly steps goal

- *How many steps do I need to take per day?* General recommendations for adults are 10,000 steps per day. That may seem like a lot of steps, but what you will find that little efforts throughout the day go a long way to increasing your physical activity resulting in your improved health.
- Now that you know where you're at (by clocking your steps and creating your starting baseline), and where you want to go (10,000 steps per day), set a reasonable weekly steps goal.
- Example: You are currently taking 5,000 steps per day. Considering that 1,000 steps is approximately 1km or 10 minutes of brisk walking you decide that your goal is to add a brisk walk to your daily schedule. Week by week in 10 minute increments you increase until you are walking an additional 50 minutes or 5km per day.

- If you're currently taking 1000-2000 steps per day don't fret – everyone has somewhere to start. Allow yourself time to progress as you're comfortable.

5. Get Creative

Get creative with how you achieve your steps. Walking isn't the only way to achieve increased steps. Here are some other suggestions to improve your step count.

- Take stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Park your car a few blocks from your destination and walk the rest.
- Walk around while you talk on the phone.
- Take a marching in place minute once an hour.
- Do physical chores like cleaning, vacuuming, sweeping, etc.
- Play an active game with your kids or grandkids. Not only will this help you achieve your steps goals, it will help your family be active too! They may even want to get a pedometer too to join in the challenge.

Walking is a great way to achieve your steps goals and get fit! Enjoy the challenge and have fun as you journey towards regularly achieving 10 000 steps per day. As you add this new activity you may find your muscles are getting tighter – make sure you maintain your flexibility by stretching (check out the LifeWorks Total body Stretching Routine online at www.lwhs.com - from the main page click on "resources.").

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