

# WALKING HANDBOOK

## WELCOME!

Congratulations on taking the first step to a healthier you! We hope this handbook will help you make walking part of your everyday life.

### Why walk?

Walking gives you an opportunity to carve some time out of a hectic day for yourself. You can achieve fitness through walking while listening to your favourite tunes or taking time to reflect on your surroundings.

If it's difficult for you to maintain your motivation by yourself, joining a walking group may be the answer. Walking with a group gives you an opportunity to socialize. Having people around you who enjoy walking can also inspire you and hold you accountable to your own walking goals.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's Physical Activity Guide supports walking as both an endurance and strength activity.<sup>1</sup> People walk for many reasons – for exercise, for pleasure, to experience the outdoors, to lessen the effects of chronic health conditions, for environmental concerns. Walking strengthens bones and muscles and is virtually injury-free.<sup>2</sup>

*Walking can be done almost anytime, anywhere, and it's free!*

#### Walking will:

- Increase your energy level
- Enhance your mental well being
- Help you relax and sleep better
- Help you manage your body weight, reduce body fat and tone muscles
- Increase bone density, thereby helping to prevent osteoporosis
- Help increase flexibility and co-ordination
- Reduce high cholesterol and lower your risk of high blood pressure, cancer of the colon, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and osteoarthritis

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. (2003). What the Experts Say. Retrieved from: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/activities.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/activities.html)

<sup>2</sup> Government of Ontario, Active 2010. (2005). Walking-The Activity of a Lifetime.

**How much walking is enough?**

Although this varies somewhat by age and fitness level, walking at a brisk pace, 4 to 7 days per week, for at least 30 minutes (30 to 60 minutes is best), is the widely accepted guideline. While continuous activity is optimal, several short bouts of exercise (i.e. 10-minute sessions), at varied times throughout the day is also widely accepted for achieving health benefits. Most group walks are about one hour in length.

A simple way to work out how briskly you should walk is to aim to walk “fast without overexertion”. Anyone should be able to hold a conversation while walking – this is the ‘talk test’.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to be physically active. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes! For these reasons, many people have started walking programs. This handbook will help you to start your own program.

**Is it OK for Me to Walk?**

Yes	No	
		Has your doctor ever told you that you have heart trouble?
		When you are physically active, do you have any pains in your chest or on your left side (neck, shoulder, or arm)?
		Do you often feel faint or have dizzy spells?
		Do you feel extremely out of breath after you have been physically active?
		Has your health care provider told you that you have uncontrolled high blood pressure?
		Has your health care provider told you that you have bone or joint problems like arthritis, that could get worse if you are physically active (though these conditions often get better with exercise)?
		Are you over 50 years old and not used to a lot of physical activity?
		Do you have a health problem or a physical reason not mentioned here that might keep you from starting a walking program?

*If you answered “Yes” to any of the questions on the previous page, please check with your doctor before starting a walking program*

#### **Safety Tips**

- Keep personal safety in mind when you plan your route and the time of your walk.
- Bring a whistle, cell phone or change for a pay phone.
- Dress for the weather – in cool breathable fabrics for hot weather and in layers if the weather is cold.
- Wear lightweight, flat, comfortable shoes that are in good condition.
- Be sun smart. Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15-30 and a hat.
- Always drink water before, during and after walking to ensure that you don't get dehydrated.

#### **Make walking part of your day**

Plan times in your day that suit your walk. You can increase the time you walk by 10 minutes per day until 30 minutes a day becomes part of your daily routine:

- Walk your dog (or borrow your neighbour's dog).
- Walk with your kids to and from school.
- Take a walk before lunch or after dinner.
- Walk to the local shop instead of taking your car.
- Use the stairs whenever you can.

#### **Go with a friend**

Having a walking partner such as a friend, spouse, child, walking group, or a pet who is comfortable walking at your speed can keep you motivated. Making time to walk with a range of people can help make walking part of your regular routine.

Be flexible. Vary the length and time of your walks depending on the amount of time you have available.

## Set goals for yourself

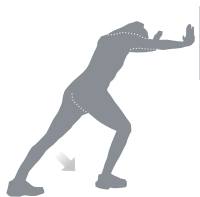
Have a target in mind, such as building up to at least 30 minutes of walking during your day. Being part of a community walking group can also be a fun way to find the time to walk.

Reaching your goals can give you a sense of achievement and confidence to go on setting further goals.

Start walking slowly and build up gradually. A walking calendar to help you keep track and build up endurance is included in this handbook.

## Getting Your Body Ready – Warm Up

It's easy. Before doing the following stretches, warm up the muscle groups by simply moving the muscle groups around, such as walking at a slower than normal pace for five to 10 minutes. Warmed muscles are much more easily stretched than cold muscles and the muscle that is used is more pliable and has more ability to be stretched. Hold each stretch with easy tension, on both sides, for a count of 20, no bouncing.



### Standing Gastrocnemius Stretch

*Stand in a walking position with one leg stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Using a wall or chair for support, lean forwards and down until you feel the stretch in the upper part of your back calf. Make sure that both feet are pointing straight ahead and that your heels stay on the floor the whole time.*



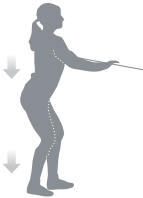
### **Hip Flexor Stretch**

*Stand in a stride standing position. Put both hands on your front knee while keeping the back knee straight. Push your pelvis forward keeping your back straight. The stretch should be felt in front of the hip and slightly down the front of the thigh.*



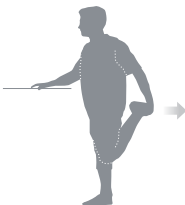
### **Standing Hamstring Stretch**

*Place one heel on a low step or bench and, keeping your knee and back straight, bend your upper body forward from your hips. You should feel the stretch behind your knee.*



### **Standing Achilles Tendon Stretch**

*Standing with one leg slightly behind the other, push your heels down while bending your knees.*



### **Standing Quadriceps Stretch**

*Hold onto something for support with one hand and grab your ankle with the other hand. Pull your ankle towards your bottom, then try to straighten your knee while resisting with your hand and allowing no movement. Then pull your ankle toward your bottom again.*

**Walk this Way!**

- Walk with your chin up and your shoulders held down and back, rather than rounded and forward. Think tall.
- Walk so that the heel of your foot touches the ground first, then roll your weight forward to the ball of your foot.
- Walk with your toes pointed forward.
- Swing your arms naturally as you walk, and do not allow your arms to cross the centerline of your body.

**Walking Calendar**

Week	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
1	15 min	15 min	20 min
2	15 min	20 min	20 min
3	15 min	25 min	20 min
4	20 min	30 min	20 min
5	20 min	30 min	30 min
6	25 min	30 min	30 min
7	25 min	30 min	40 min
8	25 min	30 min	40 min
9	30 min	40 min	40 min
10	30 min	40 min	50 min
11	40 min	40 min	50 min
12	40 min	40 min	60 min

***It is important to invest in a good pair of walking shoes.  
Look for the following in your walking shoes:***

- Shoes that fit snugly on your feet
- Have a well cushioned heel
- Have good arch support
- Have adequate toe room
- Have flexible slip-resistant soles

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
15 min	20 min	15 min	20 min
15 min	20 min	15 min	25 min
15 min	25 min	20 min	25 min
20 min	25 min	20 min	30 min
20 min	30 min	20 min	35 min
25 min	30 min	25 min	40 min
25 min	30 min	30 min	40 min
25 min	40 min	30 min	50 min
30 min	40 min	40 min	50 min
30 min	50 min	40 min	50 min
40 min	50 min	40 min	50 min
40 min	60 min	40 min	60 min

