

Fitness and Wellness: Walking

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Importance of a healthy heart: Everyone knows that the heart is absolutely fundamental to human survival, but very few people take steps to ensure that their heart is in good health. Each year heart disease tops the chart as the number one killer of Americans, but there are many easy steps that can be taken to ward off this devastating medical condition.

Improving cardiovascular health through exercise: Research shows that light to moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes a day can greatly improve cardiovascular health. Walking is the easiest way to fulfill this need. It has the lowest dropout rate of any form of exercise and can be done by almost anyone.

Benefits of a walking routine include:

- Improved blood pressure and blood sugar levels
- Improved blood lipid levels
- Reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases
- Reduced risk of obesity
- Reduced risk of diabetes
- Reduced risk of colon or breast cancer

Beginning your walking routine: First ensure that you are in proper physical condition for exercise. Men older than 40 and women older than 50 should consult a physician before beginning any sort of regular exercise, and people with known medical conditions that could be aggravated by strenuous activity should also seek counsel from a health care provider.

Setting a goal for your routine: Are you doing it to lose weight, or just to maintain a healthy heart? Those walking for heart health will need to walk less than those walking for weight-loss, and by figuring out what you wish to achieve, you can prepare yourself for success in your endeavor.

Follow through with your plan: The final step is to make sure that your plan comes to fruition. This can be the most difficult step. If you are having a hard time getting out and walking, remember that the quality of your life is what is at stake, and it is up to you to make good decisions.