

Walk Your Way to Fitness and Relief of Pain

by Deborrah Cooper of www.blacksgoingvegan.com

Walking is great for your entire body, providing stimulation of the arterial/venous system to nourish the muscles and ligaments. Gentle exercise for the heart and circulatory system by walking also aids cardiac circulation as well as the intervertebral disc of the spine. Physical movement pumps the lymphatic and synovial systems, and combined with proper breathing, decreases pain and increases circulation to all parts of the upper body.

Walking is a wonderful aerobic exercise for people of all ages, and a crucial part of the recovery and physical therapy process after injuries or surgery. Notice how medical professionals want you to get up and start walking as soon as possible after a procedure or childbirth? Walking not only reduces blood clot risk post surgery, it has been scientifically proven to decrease stress, reduce body fat, strengthen your heart and decrease the risk of heart attack, increase metabolism, and aid in weight loss.

Walking is a particularly good exercise for older individuals or those with joint problems or injuries, as it is less traumatic to the joints and internal organs than high impact exercise such as jogging. Walking is also fun to do with friends, family, or a romantic partner.



Our goal for the 30 Day Challenge Walking Program is to (over a period of 4 weeks), get you walking a total of one hours per day. Beginners would do better to schedule exercise sessions three or four times per day, for 10-15 minutes at a time, gradually increasing their strength, stamina and walking distance until the desired goal is reached.

During the first two weeks of this challenge you should plan to walk at least 4 days per week (preferably 6 days/week), *for at least 30 minutes per day*. Remember, you can break the total up into smaller segments – it is not necessary to start off doing it all at once. Gradually increase the length of time you walk each day until you are walking for one full hour by the final week of September.

Your Training (Exercising) Heart Rate

Your exercise heart rate is a wonderful fitness measuring tool. Start walking slowly in the first few minutes of your walk, gradually increasing your pace. After about 6-7 minutes, your pulse should be at your exercise heart rate.

Pulse rate calculations are best done by using the 6 second pulse technique, and multiplying the resultant figure by 10 (*i.e.*, say your heart beats 13 times in six seconds; your pulse rate is 130 per minute). By maintaining a pulse rate that is between 65% and 80% of your maximum while you exercise, you can be sure of reaping the most benefits.

To estimate your "training" heart rate, begin by subtracting your age from the number 220 (your MAXIMUM HEART RATE, which decreases with age). To determine how hard your heart should be working while you're exercising, multiply your maximum heart rate by 0.65 (65%) and again by 0.80 (80%). Your targeted goal pulse rate during your walking exercise for normal, healthy individuals is somewhere within that 65-80% range. If that seems far too complicated, use this handy online tool to help you calculate your training heart rate for walking and/or running ([Runner's World Heart Rate Calculator](#))



Try sticking to the lower end (65% of maximum) if you are exceptionally overweight, have lived a sedentary "sofa-spud" lifestyle and are very out of shape, are over the age of 40, or have a family or personal history of heart

disease. You should also check with your treating physician to schedule a stress EKG, and to discuss designing a walking program more suitable for your specific health needs.

Gently stretch legs and back for a few minutes at end of each workout.

Equipment Needed To Begin a Walking Program



Other than a pair of well-fitted, comfortable and cushioned walking shoes, not much in the way of equipment is required; however, we suggest purchasing a pedometer to track the number of steps and miles you walk per day. Comfortable clothing that doesn't chafe skin, well cushioned socks, and a windbreaker for changing weather would be beneficial. Another thing you might consider is a MP3 player if peppy music or books on tape motivate you. Prices for multiple feature pedometers and MP3 players average between \$25-75.

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