

Your Care Instructions

Walking is one of the easiest ways to get the exercise you need for good health. A brisk 30-minute walk each day can help you feel better, have more energy, and lower your risk of disease. Walking can also help you keep your bones strong and your heart healthy.

Check with your doctor before you start a walking plan if you have heart problems, other health issues or you have not been active in a long time. Follow your doctor's instructions for safe levels of exercise.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Getting started

- Start slowly and set a short-term goal. For example, walk for 5 or 10 minutes every day.
- Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk every day. Try for at least 2½ hours a week. You also may want to swim, bike or do other activities.
- If finding enough time is a problem, it is fine to be active in blocks of 10 minutes or more throughout your day and week.
- To get the heart-healthy benefits of walking, you need to walk briskly enough to increase your heart rate and breathing, but not so fast that you cannot talk comfortably.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well and provide good support for your feet and ankles.

Staying with your plan

- After you've made walking a habit, set a longer-term goal. You may want to set a goal of walking briskly for longer or walking farther. Experts say to do 2½ hours of moderate activity a week. A faster heartbeat is what defines moderate-level activity.
- To stay motivated, walk with friends, co-workers or pets.
- Use a phone app or pedometer to track your steps each day. Set a goal to increase your steps. Once you get there, set a higher goal. Aim for 10,000 steps a day.
- If the weather keeps you from walking outside, go for walks at the mall with a friend. Local schools and churches may have indoor gyms where you can walk.

Fitting a walk into your workday

- Park several blocks away from work, or get off the bus a few stops early.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator, at least for a few floors.
- Suggest holding meetings with colleagues during a walk inside or outside the building.
- Use the washroom that is the farthest from your desk or workstation.
- Use your morning and afternoon breaks to take quick 15-minute walks.

Staying safe

- Know your surroundings. Walk in a well-lighted, safe place. If it is dark, walk with a partner. Wear light-coloured clothing. If you can, buy a vest or jacket that reflects light.
- Carry a cell phone for emergencies.
- Drink plenty of water. Take a water bottle with you when you walk. This is very important during hot weather.
- Be careful not to slip on wet or icy ground. You can buy "grippers" for your shoes to help keep you from slipping.
- Pay attention to your walking surface. Use sidewalks and paths.
- If you have breathing problems like asthma or COPD, ask your doctor when it is safe for you to walk outdoors. Cold, dry air, smog, pollen or other things in the air could cause breathing problems.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

Current as of: August 19, 2018

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