

Move Those Feet...and Walk!

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Now that spring is here, it is time to move those feet and get out and walk. Walking is a great form of exercise. It is easy, safe, inexpensive, and can be done virtually anywhere.

Walking provides several benefits. Not only is walking a way to stay fit, but it can also increase your circulation, decrease your blood pressure, prevent heart attacks/strokes, increase your metabolism, help manage/control pain and increase your psychological well being. A brisk walk can burn up to 300 calories per hour.

Anybody can walk, but it is a good idea to check with your doctor first if you have been fairly inactive or have specific health issues. You should also invest in a good pair of shoes that will provide support and cushion your feet.

You should take 5 minutes before and after your walk to perform a few stretches to stretch out your calf, trunk and thigh muscles. To stretch out your calves you can either drop your heel off of a curb or step until a stretch is felt. Hold 20 seconds and repeat on other leg. To stretch out your trunk, stand up straight, reach one arm over your head and side bend until a stretch is felt on the opposite side...hold for 20 seconds then repeat for the other side. To stretch out the front thigh muscles, stand and then bend one knee behind you and gently pull foot toward your buttock, hold for 10 seconds and repeat with the other leg. To stretch the back of your thigh, stand tall and pull one knee to your chest, hold 20 seconds and repeat with the other leg.

Walking can be easy but you also want to make sure you are walking properly to avoid injury. Walk with your chin up and shoulders back. Walk so that your heel strikes the ground first and then shift weight to roll off your toes, walk with your toes pointed forward and swing your arms.

Finally, set obtainable goals. Start out slow and over time. Gradually increase speed, distance and walking time. Walking 20 minutes 3 times a week can lead to a better and healthy life...so get out and enjoy!