

# Walk your way to better health

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

We've heard it before: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Such a cliché, right?

But a single step will start you on the path toward [better health](#), and you'll need to accrue significantly less than a thousand miles. In fact, you just need 10,000 steps.

That magic number may seem daunting but is much easier to reach than

you think. Clocking in at roughly 5 miles, this guideline meets the U.S. surgeon general's recommendation of 30 minutes of [moderate activity](#) a day.

The result? Decreased risk of heart disease, [lower blood pressure](#), weight maintenance and reduced risk of osteoporosis are just some of the benefits of hitting 10,000 daily steps, according to the American Heart Association.

Citing 2013 research in the National Runners' Health Study and National Walkers' Health Study, the AHA argues that moderate-intensity walking is as beneficial as vigorous running, though runners end up exercising twice as much in the same amount of time as walkers. That said, any spurt of activity is beneficial to [health](#), according to the group.

It all begins with that one step. If you're starting from the beginning, nonprofit group Shape Up America offers tips on building up to the magic number, but their first tip? Get a pedometer. (Luckily, many smartphones now offer walking apps to track your daily steps, among other things.)

Shape Up says most people walk between 900 and 3,000 steps, but it's easy to build up to 10,000 without strain. Setting daily goals - 2,500 the first week, 3,000 the next - helps scale your walking until you eventually reach 10,000.

And don't think that you have to knock out 10,000 steps all at once. The AHA's Russell Pate, a professor of exercise science in the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, suggests breaking up your walks into manageable 10- to 15-minute chunks. "It's not a skill-dependent form of activity," Pate said. "It's the most accessible form of physical activity."

Build in a walk on your lunch break, or walk after dinner with a friend or loved one. A few simple changes - even pacing while on the phone - will get you to the magic number in no time. "You can do it almost anywhere," Pate said.

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