

Walking: the cheap, easy workout

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(HealthDay)—Walking is a simple and inexpensive exercise that has been shown to offer numerous benefits for bones, muscles and joints.

"Sometimes the hardest part of working out is getting started," Dr. Carolyn Hettrich, a spokesperson for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, said in an academy news release.

"Walking requires minimal preparation, but yields significant benefits. Establish a routine by incorporating at least 30 minutes a day for five days a week," she advised.

Hettrich also offered these suggestions:

- Wear shoes that support the arch and elevate the heel slightly. There should be stiff material surrounding the heel to prevent your foot from wobbling. The toe area should be roomy but not too long.
- Warm up by walking at a normal pace for 5 minutes, then boost your pace so your heart beats faster and your lungs breathe deeper. Keep up the faster pace for about 15 minutes.
- While walking: swing your arms; keep your head up, back straight, and abdomen flat; point your toes straight ahead; and take long strides, but do not strain. Cool down by walking at your warm-up speed again for 5 more minutes, and do gentle stretching after your walk.
- Start off by doing this type of walking three or four days a week, with days for rest in between. After two weeks, add 5 minutes to the strenuous part of your walk. Keep adding 5 minutes every two weeks as you gradually build strength and endurance.
- You can give your upper body a workout while walking by carrying one to five pound weights in each hand. Using [walking sticks](#) or poles can improve lower body stability, and reduce the stress on your legs, knees, ankles and feet.
- Be sure to drink enough water to prevent dehydration. Drink one pint of water 15 minutes before you start your walk, and another pint after you cool down. Have a drink of water every 20 minutes

or as needed while you exercise.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has more about [walking for health](#).

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