

How to start a walking plan

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(HealthDay)—Are you completely new to exercise? Getting fit doesn't have to be expensive or complicated. In fact, it can be as simple as putting one foot in front of the other.

Starting a walking program can get you on the path to [better health](#). All you need to get going are supportive athletic shoes, comfortable clothes, a safe place to walk, and the OK from your doctor if you're out of shape or have any [chronic conditions](#).

When you're new to exercise, it's important to start slowly. Try walking for 5 to 10 minutes a day for the first few weeks. Gradually add more time and distance. Eventually, pick up the pace—your goal is to walk briskly for at least 30 minutes on most days.

One way to help you stay motivated to reach your fitness goals is to keep track of how many steps you take each day. You can do this with an inexpensive pedometer or a [fitness program](#) on your smartphone or smartwatch. Aim to reach 10,000 steps.

That might sound like a lot, but you can add to your daily total in many small ways. Besides your daily walk, work in extra steps by moving whenever you can. Walk to your co-worker's desk to talk about that big project instead of sending an email. Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible.

Warm-ups and cool-downs are important parts of every fitness plan, even walking. Before and after your workout, walk slowly for 5 minutes. At the end of every walk, gently stretch your muscles. Don't skip these steps—they can help prevent injury.

For fun and [fitness](#), round up your office staff or some neighbors for a walking club. Walking in a group will also keep you motivated to continue.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has more about the benefits of walking and how to create a [daily walking program](#) suited to beginners.

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