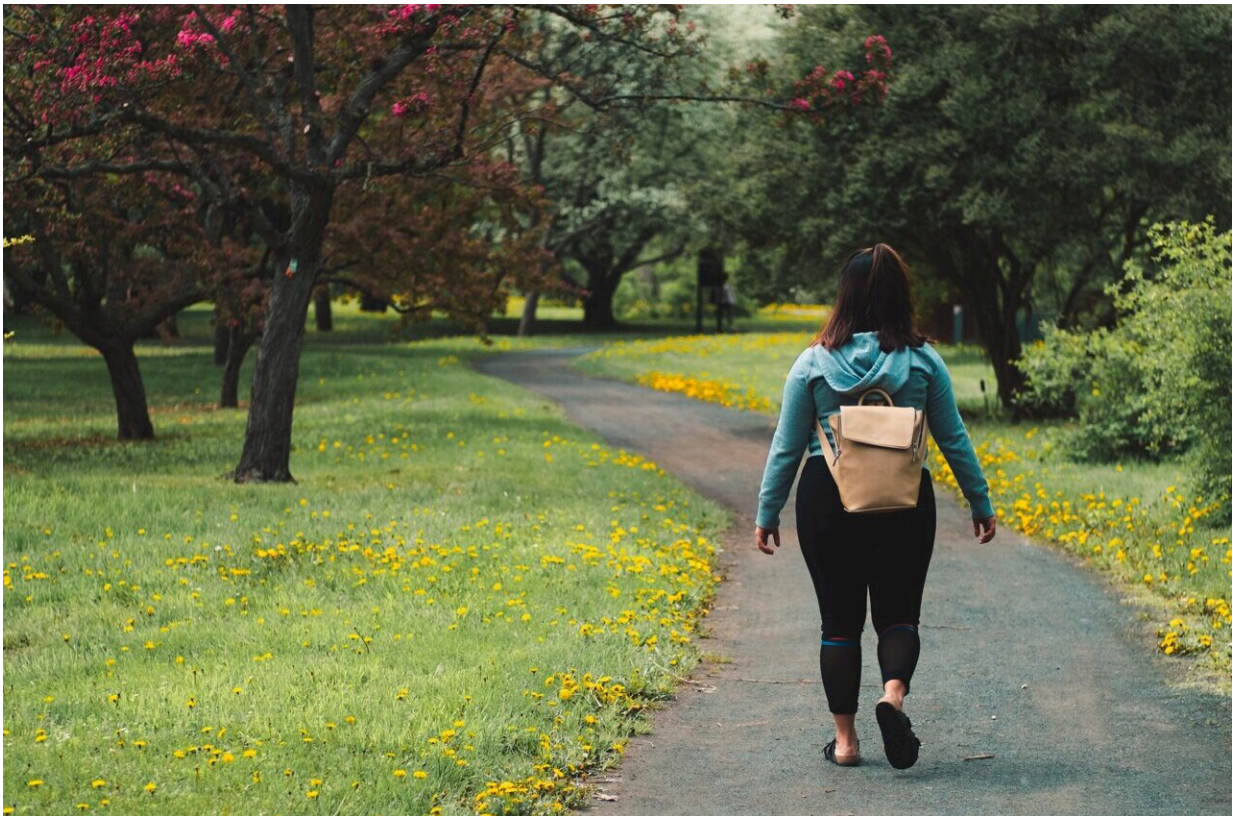


# Walking is great for lower back pain—here's how to get the most out of this exercise

July 15 2024, by Athalie Redwood-Brown and Jen Wilson

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If you're one of the [millions of people worldwide](#) who suffer from lower back pain, you might want to try going for a walk.

[Numerous studies](#) have shown [walking](#) has many benefits when it comes to [alleviating low back pain](#). And, according to a [recent study](#), going for a walk just three times a week can significantly reduce discomfort, improve spinal health and quality of life for people suffering with low back pain.

There are a number of reasons why walking can help.

First, walking increases [blood circulation](#), which helps deliver [more oxygen and nutrients](#) to the spine and the muscles surrounding it. Better circulation reduces inflammation and speeds up the [healing process](#) of [damaged tissues](#), which may help [reduce lower back pain](#).

Second, regular walking engages and [strengthens the core muscles](#)—including those in the lower back, abdomen and pelvis. A stronger core provides better support for the spine, reducing strain on the lower back and alleviating pain.

According to [one study](#), strengthening core muscles through walking can lead to significant pain reduction and improvements in spinal stability.

Walking also activates the glute muscles which are crucial for stabilizing the muscles around the back, pelvis and abdomen. Being sedentary can lead to [changes in muscle and joint function](#) and can make muscles weaker. Walking requires an upright posture which engages the muscles that are underused while sitting. This will probably help reduce back pain, as well as increase strength in important glute muscles.

Alongside this, walking encourages gentle movement of the spine and hip joints, promoting flexibility and preventing stiffness. And unlike more dynamic activities—such as running—walking [places less stress](#) on the body.

Increased mobility helps maintain a [healthy range of motion](#) and reduces the risk of [muscle imbalances](#) which can contribute to back pain.

Consistent walking also of course improves posture by encouraging an upright stance and proper alignment of the spine. Good posture reduces stress on the lower back and helps prevent pain caused by [poor alignment](#). Walking with a more [upright posture](#) is also linked to decreased stress compared to people who slouch while walking.

Last, walking triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. These chemicals help reduce the perception of pain and improve overall mood, which is beneficial for those suffering from chronic back pain.

One study even showed that walking stimulates the brain to release [serotonin as well as endorphins](#)—reducing pain and improving mood.

## **Start walking**

If you experience mild [lower back pain](#) and are keen to give walking a try, here are a few things to bear in mind so you can get the most out of your walks:

### **1. Start gradually**

Begin with short walks of 10–15 minutes—gradually increasing the length and intensity as you get fitter. This prevents overexertion and allows your body to adapt. You could also adjust your [daily activities](#) to include more walking—such as parking further from your destination.

### **2. Maintain good posture**

Focus on maintaining an upright posture while walking. Avoid slouching or leaning forward. Keep your head up, shoulders back and engage core muscles. Distribute weight evenly if carrying items—either using both backpack straps or switching hands if carrying something.

### **3. Choose the right footwear**

Wear supportive, comfortable shoes that provide cushioning and arch support. Proper footwear helps absorb shock and [reduce the impact](#) on your lower back.

### **4. Walk on even surfaces**

Opt for flat, even surfaces such as pavements, tracks or treadmills. Uneven terrain can increase the risk of falls, fatigue and add additional [strain on your lower back](#).

### **5. Warm up and cool down**

Begin each walk with a 5–10 minute warm-up, either doing a slow, gentle walk or some [dynamic stretches](#) to prepare your muscles. Similarly, end your walk with a cool-down period, including stretches that target the lower back, hamstrings and hip flexors to enhance flexibility and prevent stiffness.

### **6. Stay consistent**

Aim to walk at least three times a week as this is shown to provide [long-term relief](#) from lower back pain.

### **7. Vary your routine**

Incorporate different types of walking to keep your regimen interesting and challenging. Try brisk walking, interval walking (alternating the speed you walk—doing 30 seconds fast walking followed by 30 seconds of slow walking) or even go for a hike to engage different [muscle](#) groups and boost your fitness.

## **8. Track your progress**

Keep track of your walking duration, intensity and how your back feels before and after each session. Monitoring your progress can help you identify patterns, set goals and stay motivated.

## **9. Stay hydrated**

Drink plenty of water before, during and after your walks to stay hydrated. Proper hydration is essential for [muscle function](#) and overall health.

## **10. Listen to your body**

Pay attention to how your body responds to walking. If you experience a spike in pain or discomfort, consider modifying your routine or talk to your doctor. As with all forms of exercise, there may be some mild soreness at first as your body adjusts to a new routine.

Walking is a simple, low-impact exercise that anyone can do almost anywhere. Following this advice will ensure you get the most out of your walks, potentially paving the way for a healthier, pain-free life.

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