

A to B

Circular

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from

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+

to

direct

less busy

low pollution ?

Go



Walking for health

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Walking for health
 - Walking to lose weight
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Walking for health

Walking is a fantastic way to get – and stay – healthy.

One of the reasons health experts give walking such rave reviews is because it's a 'lifestyle exercise'. That means you can usually make time for it without too much of a change to your daily routine. Walking to work, to the shops, or the final mile from the bus stop to your friend's house may take a little more time, but it's certainly not the big project that signing up for a gym (and making the time to get there) can be.

Because it's easy to fit into everyday life, people who walk tend to keep it up. And as you'll see below, regular exercise is exactly what you need to improve your health.

What are the health benefits of walking?

Here's a startling fact for you:
Burning 500-1000 calories per week (that's about 6-12 miles walking for an average weight person) reduces the risk of premature death by 20-30%.

- Walking will help protect you against:
- Cardiovascular disease (coronary heart disease and stroke), as well as 'risk factors' such as high blood pressure and cholesterol
 - Cancer (particularly bowel cancer, and breast cancer in post-menopausal women)
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Obesity
- It has also been shown to improve:
- Musculoskeletal health (for example osteoarthritis and lower back pain)
 - Mental health, happiness and well-being



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How much walking should I be doing?

The UK's Department of Health guidelines are pretty straightforward: For general health, adults should do 30 minutes a day of moderate intensity physical activity, on five or more days of the week. Children and young people need to exercise for at least an hour each day.

The great news is that your 30 minutes of activity doesn't all have to be in one go, so you can build up that amount in short walks of 10 minutes or more. (Of course there are many different kinds of exercise that you might choose, but we're focusing on walking for obvious reasons!)

You'll receive even greater health benefits if you do more than your 30 minutes, but there's a 'law of diminishing returns' – that is: the amount of extra benefit you get for each extra 30 minutes will be slightly less than the 30 minutes before it.

The most important thing to remember is that most of the health benefits you receive from being regularly active are lost if you don't keep that level of activity up.

So steady, regular exercise throughout the year – and throughout your life – is much better for you than wearing out your trainers in January and crashing on the sofa for the rest of the year!

What does 'moderate intensity activity' mean?

Because everyone has a different level of fitness, it's not possible to say exactly how fast you need to walk to reach the level of 'moderate intensity'.

The important thing to focus on is not your speed, but how it *feels*. You need to be aiming for:

- An increase in your breathing rate
- An increase in your heart rate, to the level where you can feel your pulse
- An increase in your body temperature (possibly even working up a bit of a sweat on hot or humid days)

A great technique is to imagine you're late for a train that you've booked a ticket on, and need to rush to the station before it leaves without you. With that in mind, you'll find that your walking becomes much more energetic and purposeful!

Remember that you don't need to overdo it. The right pace is one that you should be able to keep up for many minutes, and you shouldn't be exhausted at the end of it.

So... now that you know what you need to do, why not dig out your comfy walking shoes, find an interesting walking route and start walking your way to a longer, happier and healthier life?

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