

Walk a Mile in Your Own Shoes! **by Dr. Stephen Godin BSc, DC**

Walking is a form of physical activity that rarely gets the credit it deserves. If you have ever walked for 10 minutes or more, you have done more for your health than you probably realize.

A recent article in the Journal of the American Medical Association revealed that moderate activity, even done in short bouts of 8 to 10 minutes is enough to help control high blood pressure, and increase HDL (the good cholesterol). The authors of the study recommend that “Every adult should *accumulate* 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.” Brisk walking is one means of achieving “moderate activity.”

Positive cardiovascular effects are not the only benefit of walking. Simply putting one foot in front of the other also helps to decrease stress, improve self-esteem, increase energy levels, avoid weight gain and improve bone strength and muscle flexibility.

In order to “fit” walking into your schedule try one of the following:

- Walk instead of driving on short trips (like to the corner store).
- Go for a 10 minute walk on your lunch hour.
- Mow the lawn.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk around the golf course and give the carts a rest!

Walking does not require elaborate talent, or costly equipment. That is what makes it a perfect activity choice for all ages. However, in order to exercise safely, you should follow these recommendations:

1. If you are not accustomed to exercise, or are unsure of your limits, check with your doctor before beginning to walk regularly.
2. Don't do too much, too soon. Start within your comfort zone and increase gradually. For example, start with a slow paced 10 minute walk daily for a week, and then move up to a moderate paced 15-20 minute walk. Always watch for the signs of overexertion (difficulty breathing, dizziness and excessive fatigue), and listen to your body when it says to stop!
3. Wear layered clothing to ensure warmth without overheating.
4. Wear comfortable, yet supportive shoes designed for walking or running. No sandals!
5. Drink plenty of water before, during and after walking.

6. Don't forget to warm-up before walking and stretch your muscles afterward. This will help to retain your flexibility and avoid damage to the muscle and joints. You'll thank yourself the next day when you're not aching!

7. Walk at a brisk pace, but one that still allows you to talk to a friend.

8. Walk with a partner or friend – it's more enjoyable and safer.

9. Vary your route regularly – keep it interesting!

10. Set personal goals for yourself, write them down and check periodically to make sure you're on track.

Remember, it takes very little effort on a daily basis to have a profound impact on your health. Walk a mile in your own shoes today and experience the benefits of this enjoyable, healthy habit!

If you have any questions about walking, or would like further information please contact Dr. Stephen Godin at Cole Harbour Chiropractic, **435-WELL**.