



SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION FOR WALKERS

When taking on a new fitness activity your goal should be to develop a healthy body using a combination of exercise, diet, stress management and rest. Focus on preventing injury and illness. Most walking injuries are preventable. In order to remain healthy, it is important to understand the types of injuries that you may be susceptible to and learn how to incorporate some basic injury prevention strategies into your overall training. Here are some general suggestions.

Warm-Up & Cool Down

When muscles are cold, they feel stiff and hard to move. To perform well, and avoid injury, you need to warm up before activity and spend time cooling down afterwards. Develop your own routines based on the general principles listed below. Have fun putting together your own warm-up routine and try something new to keep your workouts interesting and fresh!

- Perform a general dynamic body warm-up. Move your arms, legs and trunk continuously to get the blood flowing faster. Walking is an ideal warm-up for any fitness enthusiast regardless of ability.
- Once warm, stretch your muscles through a slower, controlled sequence of exercises.

After Activity

- Keep your muscles active for 10-15 minutes using a similar but less intense version of your warm-up.
- Stretch using the same sequence of exercises you used in your warm-up. This is often an excellent time to work on your flexibility, holding stretches for 10-20 seconds or longer as you feel.

Progress Slowly

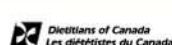
The progressions in the SportMedBC walking programs are slow and deliberate. It is important NOT to increase your activity level by more than 10 percent a week. The leading cause of injuries for new exercisers is walking too far before they're ready. Remember that your focus is on the time spent in your workout, NOT the distance that you cover.

SportMed RunWalk

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Choose Your Walking Surface Wisely

Asphalt is the surface on which most walkers log the most miles. While not the softest surface, asphalt is a little easier on your joints than concrete. Try to walk on the most level part of the road or pathway. Cambered roads will lead to imbalance and possible injury. Be alert when walking on grass and dirt trails. Look out for things like hard-to-see bumps, holes, sprinklers, and tree roots.

Never Walk With Pain

If something hurts, don't try to "walk through it". Listen to your body. Pain is a warning sign that should not be ignored. In the beginning, there will always be a few aches and pains that come with starting a new activity. However, they should dissipate within 24 to 48 hours. If they don't, or the pain intensifies, seek professional assistance. Early identification and treatment of an injury will result in minimal interruptions to your program schedule. It is very important to listen to your body and to be able to distinguish between an ache and pain. An ache is a low-level discomfort associated with exercising, while pain is sharp discomfort that can be pinpointed.

Promptly Treat Injuries

Muscle pulls, joint sprains or other injuries should be promptly treated using the RICE principle.

- Restrict activity or rest the injured area until an accurate diagnosis can be made.
- Ice for approximately 20 minutes every hour, allowing about 40 minutes in between treatments. Do this as often as possible for the first 24 to 72 hours. Do not use heat.
- Compression through the application of an elastic tensor bandage helps reduce swelling, pain, bruising and other signs of inflammation, especially when combined with ice and elevation. NEVER LEAVE AN ELASTIC BANDAGE ON OVERNIGHT.
- Elevation by raising the injured area above the level of the heart also assists in reducing swelling often associated with injury.

Not Every Day is a Walking Day

Some days, you just shouldn't exercise. If you've got the flu or a bad chest cold, take a couple of days off. Likewise, trying to exercise through an injury may result in the problem getting worse. What may have taken a few rest days to recover from ends up hobbling you for weeks. Better to take off an extra day or two or three, even if you think the pain isn't serious.



Plan to be "Safe"

Whether you are out for a stroll with friends or out on your own, take a moment to reflect and act on the following suggestions; they will help you to stay safe and show courtesy to others around you.

Before you head out:

- Carry identification or write your name, phone number, and blood type on a small piece of paper. Put it in a shoe key holder and attach it to the top of your shoes, or wear a small fanny pack. Carry your cell phone or some change in case you need to make a phone call.
- Write down or leave word of your route. Inform your friends and family of your favorite places to exercise.
- Remove any flashy jewelry that could attract attention.

Out on the road:

- If you are walking in a group, don't take over the road/sidewalk/trail. Where necessary, walk single file and leave room for someone to get by without being swarmed.
- If you are walking along in a tight pack or large group and see a hazard on the course ahead, call out or raise your hand so those following will know something is up before they have to leap. Also, if you're coming from behind at a brisk pace, warn the unsuspecting pedestrian so that you don't startle them. "On your left/right" or "watch your back" are great phrases to use.
- Stay out of bike and traffic lanes for both safety and courtesy.
- If you are not on a sidewalk or safe pathway, walk against traffic so you can observe approaching automobiles. Don't try to beat cars, bikes, or trains across intersections!

Common Sense:

- Walk in familiar areas. Know the location of telephones and open businesses and stores. Don't be too predictable - consider frequently altering your route. Avoid unpopulated areas, deserted streets and overgrown trails. Especially avoid unlit areas at night. Walk clear of parked cars and bushes.
- Always stay alert. The more aware you are, the less vulnerable you are. Ipods and MP3 player are fun to wear but be careful. Keep the volume down if you choose to walk wearing headphones. You need your hearing to avoid danger and be better aware of your surroundings.
- Ignore verbal harassment. Use discretion in acknowledging strangers. Look directly at others and be observant, but keep your distance and keep moving.



- Wear reflective material if exercising outdoors before dawn or after dark.
- Use your intuition about suspicious persons or areas. React on your intuition and avoid any person or area that "feels" unsafe. Call the police immediately if something happens to you or someone else, or if you notice anything out of the ordinary during your walk.
- Carry a whistle or noisemaker.