



WALKING

HANDBOOK



The Walking Handbook is a resource of the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA). It is being distributed through Walk BC which is co-led by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of British Columbia & Yukon and BCRPA.



**HEART &
STROKE**
FOUNDATION
OF BC & YUKON

Finding answers. For life.

WELCOME!

Congratulations on taking the first step to a healthier you! We hope this handbook will help you make walking part of your everyday life.

Why walk?

Walking gives you an opportunity to carve some time out of a hectic day for yourself. You can achieve fitness through walking while listening to your favourite tunes or taking time to reflect on your surroundings.

If it's difficult for you to maintain your motivation by yourself, joining a walking group may be the answer. Walking with a group gives you an opportunity to socialize. Having people around you who enjoy walking can also inspire you and hold you accountable to your own walking goals.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's Physical Activity Guide supports walking as both an endurance and strength activity.¹ People walk for many reasons – for exercise, for pleasure, to experience the outdoors, to lessen the effects of chronic health conditions, for environmental concerns. Walking strengthens bones and muscles and is virtually injury-free.²

Walking can be done almost anytime, anywhere, and it's free!

Walking will:

- Increase your energy level
- Enhance your mental well being
- Help you relax and sleep better
- Help you manage your body weight, reduce body fat and tone muscles
- Increase bone density, thereby helping to prevent osteoporosis
- Help increase flexibility and co-ordination
- Reduce high cholesterol and lower your risk of high blood pressure, cancer of the colon, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and osteoarthritis

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada. (2003). What the Experts Say. Retrieved from: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/activities.html

² Government of Ontario, Active 2010. (2005). Walking-The Activity of a Lifetime.

How much walking is enough?

Although this varies somewhat by age and fitness level, walking at a brisk pace, 4 to 7 days per week, for at least 30 minutes (30 to 60 minutes is best), is the widely accepted guideline. While continuous activity is optimal, several short bouts of exercise (i.e. 10-minute sessions), at varied times throughout the day is also widely accepted for achieving health benefits. Most group walks are about one hour in length.

A simple way to work out how briskly you should walk is to aim to walk “fast without overexertion”. Anyone should be able to hold a conversation while walking – this is the ‘talk test’.

Walking is one of the easiest ways to be physically active. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes! For these reasons, many people have started walking programs. This handbook will help you to start your own program.

Is it OK for Me to Walk?

| Yes | No | |
|-----|----|---|
| | | Has your doctor ever told you that you have heart trouble? |
| | | When you are physically active, do you have any pains in your chest or on your left side (neck, shoulder, or arm)? |
| | | Do you often feel faint or have dizzy spells? |
| | | Do you feel extremely out of breath after you have been physically active? |
| | | Has your health care provider told you that you have uncontrolled high blood pressure? |
| | | Has your health care provider told you that you have bone or joint problems like arthritis, that could get worse if you are physically active (though these conditions often get better with exercise)? |
| | | Are you over 50 years old and not used to a lot of physical activity? |
| | | Do you have a health problem or a physical reason not mentioned here that might keep you from starting a walking program? |

If you answered “Yes” to any of the questions on the previous page, please check with your doctor before starting a walking program

Safety Tips

- Keep personal safety in mind when you plan your route and the time of your walk.
- Bring a whistle, cell phone or change for a pay phone.
- Dress for the weather – in cool breathable fabrics for hot weather and in layers if the weather is cold.
- Wear lightweight, flat, comfortable shoes that are in good condition.
- Be sun smart. Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15-30 and a hat.
- Always drink water before, during and after walking to ensure that you don't get dehydrated.

Make walking part of your day

Plan times in your day that suit your walk. You can increase the time you walk by 10 minutes per day until 30 minutes a day becomes part of your daily routine:

- Walk your dog (or borrow your neighbour's dog).
- Walk with your kids to and from school.
- Take a walk before lunch or after dinner.
- Walk to the local shop instead of taking your car.
- Use the stairs whenever you can.

Go with a friend

Having a walking partner such as a friend, spouse, child, walking group, or a pet who is comfortable walking at your speed can keep you motivated. Making time to walk with a range of people can help make walking part of your regular routine.

Be flexible. Vary the length and time of your walks depending on the amount of time you have available.

Set goals for yourself

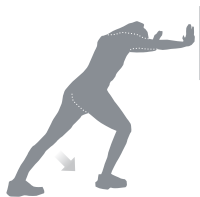
Have a target in mind, such as building up to at least 30 minutes of walking during your day. Being part of a community walking group can also be a fun way to find the time to walk.

Reaching your goals can give you a sense of achievement and confidence to go on setting further goals.

Start walking slowly and build up gradually. A walking calendar to help you keep track and build up endurance is included in this handbook.

Getting Your Body Ready – Warm Up

It's easy. Before doing the following stretches, warm up the muscle groups by simply moving the muscle groups around, such as walking at a slower than normal pace for five to 10 minutes. Warmed muscles are much more easily stretched than cold muscles and the muscle that is used is more pliable and has more ability to be stretched. Hold each stretch with easy tension, on both sides, for a count of 20, no bouncing.



Standing Gastrocnemius Stretch

Stand in a walking position with one leg stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Using a wall or chair for support, lean forwards and down until you feel the stretch in the upper part of your back calf. Make sure that both feet are pointing straight ahead and that your heels stay on the floor the whole time.



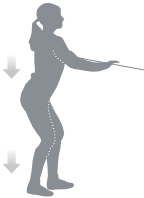
Hip Flexor Stretch

Stand in a stride standing position. Put both hands on your front knee while keeping the back knee straight. Push your pelvis forward keeping your back straight. The stretch should be felt in front of the hip and slightly down the front of the thigh.



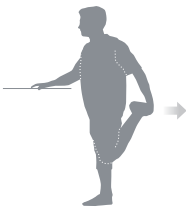
Standing Hamstring Stretch

Place one heel on a low step or bench and, keeping your knee and back straight, bend your upper body forward from your hips. You should feel the stretch behind your knee.



Standing Achilles Tendon Stretch

Standing with one leg slightly behind the other, push your heels down while bending your knees.



Standing Quadriceps Stretch

Hold onto something for support with one hand and grab your ankle with the other hand. Pull your ankle towards your bottom, then try to straighten your knee while resisting with your hand and allowing no movement. Then pull your ankle toward your bottom again.

Walk this Way!

- Walk with your chin up and your shoulders held down and back, rather than rounded and forward. Think tall.
- Walk so that the heel of your foot touches the ground first, then roll your weight forward to the ball of your foot.
- Walk with your toes pointed forward.
- Swing your arms naturally as you walk, and do not allow your arms to cross the centerline of your body.

Walking Calendar

| Week | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday |
|------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1 | 15 min | 15 min | 20 min |
| 2 | 15 min | 20 min | 20 min |
| 3 | 15 min | 25 min | 20 min |
| 4 | 20 min | 30 min | 20 min |
| 5 | 20 min | 30 min | 30 min |
| 6 | 25 min | 30 min | 30 min |
| 7 | 25 min | 30 min | 40 min |
| 8 | 25 min | 30 min | 40 min |
| 9 | 30 min | 40 min | 40 min |
| 10 | 30 min | 40 min | 50 min |
| 11 | 40 min | 40 min | 50 min |
| 12 | 40 min | 40 min | 60 min |

*It is important to invest in a good pair of walking shoes.
Look for the following in your walking shoes:*

- Shoes that fit snugly on your feet
- Have a well cushioned heel
- Have good arch support
- Have adequate toe room
- Have flexible slip-resistant soles

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 15 min | 20 min | 15 min | 20 min |
| 15 min | 20 min | 15 min | 25 min |
| 15 min | 25 min | 20 min | 25 min |
| 20 min | 25 min | 20 min | 30 min |
| 20 min | 30 min | 20 min | 35 min |
| 25 min | 30 min | 25 min | 40 min |
| 25 min | 30 min | 30 min | 40 min |
| 25 min | 40 min | 30 min | 50 min |
| 30 min | 40 min | 40 min | 50 min |
| 30 min | 50 min | 40 min | 50 min |
| 40 min | 50 min | 40 min | 50 min |
| 40 min | 60 min | 40 min | 60 min |

BARRIERS TO BEING ACTIVE QUIZ⁴

What keeps you from being more active?

Directions: Listed below are reasons that people give to describe why they do not get as much physical activity as they think they should. Please read each statement and indicate how likely you are to say each of the following statements:

⁴ Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); *Physical Activity for Everyone – Making Physical Activity Part of Your Life – Overcoming Barriers to Physical Activity*. Retrieved from: http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/barriers_quiz.pdf

| How likely are you to say? | Very likely | Some what likely | Some what unlikely | Very unlikely |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. My day is so busy I just don't think I can make the time to include physical activity in my regular schedule. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 2. None of my family members or friends like to do anything active, so I don't have a chance to exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 3. I'm just too tired after work to get any exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 4. I've been thinking about getting more exercise, but I just can't seem to get started. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 5. I'm getting older so exercise can be risky. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 6. I don't get enough exercise because I have never learned the skills for any sport. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 7. I don't have access to jogging trails, swimming pools, bike paths, etc. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 8. Physical activity takes too much time away from other commitments like time, work, family, etc. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 9. I'm embarrassed about how I look when I exercise with others. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 10. I don't get enough sleep as it is. I just couldn't get up early or stay up late to get some exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

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| How likely are you to say? | Very likely | Some what likely | Some what unlikely | Very unlikely |
|--|-------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 11. It's easier for me to find excuses not to exercise than go out to do something. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 12. I know of too many people who have hurt themselves by overdoing it with exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 13. I really can't see learning a new sport at my age. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 14. It's just too expensive. You have to take a class or join a club or buy the right equipment. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 15. My free times during the day are too short to include exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 16. My usual social activities with friends do not include physical activity. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 17. I'm too tired during the week and I need the weekend to catch up on my rest. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 18. I want to get more exercise, but I just can't seem to make myself stick to anything. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 19. I'm afraid I might injure myself or have a heart attack. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 20. I'm not good enough at any physical activity to make it fun. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| 21. If we had exercise facilities and showers at work, then I would be more likely to exercise. | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

Scoring and Interpretation

Follow these instructions to score yourself:

- Enter the circled numbers in the spaces provided, putting together the number for statement 1 on line 1, statement 2 on line 2, and so on.
- Add the three scores on each line. Your barriers to physical activity fall into one or more of seven categories: lack of time, social influences, lack of energy, lack of willpower, fear of injury, lack of skill, and lack of resources. A score of 5 or above in any category shows that this is an important barrier for you to overcome.

(1) ____ +(8) ____ +(15) ____ = ____ (Lack of time)

(2) ____ +(9) ____ +(16) ____ = ____ (Social influence)

(3) ____ +(10) ____ +(17) ____ = ____ (Lack of energy)

(4) ____ +(11) ____ +(18) ____ = ____ (Lack of willpower)

(5) ____ +(12) ____ +(19) ____ = ____ (Fear of injury)

(6) ____ +(13) ____ +(20) ____ = ____ (Lack of skill)

(7) ____ +(14) ____ +(21) ____ = ____ (Lack of resources)

NOTE: Please see next page, for suggestions on overcoming physical activity barriers.

OVERCOMING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY BARRIERS

Suggestions for Overcoming
Physical Activity Barriers

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <p>Lack of time</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify available time slots. Monitor your daily activities for one week. ■ Identify at least three 30-minute time slots you could use for physical activity. ■ Add physical activity to your daily routine. For example, walk or ride your bike to work or to shop, organize school activities around physical activity, walk the dog, exercise while you watch TV, park farther away from your destination, etc. ■ Make time for physical activity. For example, walk, jog, or swim during your lunch hour, or take fitness breaks instead of coffee breaks. ■ Select activities requiring minimal time, such as walking, jogging, or stairclimbing. |
| <p>Social influence</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Explain your interest in physical activity to friends and family. Ask them to support your efforts. ■ Invite friends and family members to exercise with you. Plan social activities involving exercise. ■ Develop new friendships with physically active people. Join a group, such as the YMCA or a hiking club. |
| <p>Lack of energy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you feel energetic. ■ Convince yourself that if you give it a chance, physical activity will increase your energy level; then, try it. |
| <p>Lack of motivation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Plan ahead. Make physical activity a regular part of your daily or weekly schedule and write it on your calendar. ■ Invite a friend to exercise with you on a regular basis and write it on both your calendars. ■ Join an exercise group or class. |

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| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Fear of injury | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Learn how to warm up and cool down to prevent injury.■ Learn how to exercise appropriately considering your age, fitness level, skill level, and health status.■ Choose activities involving minimum risk. |
| Lack of skill | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Select activities requiring no new skills, such as walking, climbing stairs, or jogging.■ Exercise with friends who are at the same skill level as you are.■ Find a friend who is willing to teach you some new skills.■ Take a class to develop new skills. |
| Lack of resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Select activities that require minimal facilities or equipment, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, or calisthenics.■ Identify inexpensive, convenient resources available in your community (community education programs, park and recreation programs, worksite programs, etc.). |
| Retirement years | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Look upon your retirement as an opportunity to become more active instead of less. Spend more time gardening, walking the dog, and playing with your grandchildren. Children with short legs and grandparents with slower gaits are often great walking partners.■ Learn a new skill you've always been interested in, such as ballroom dancing, square dancing, or swimming.■ Now that you have the time, make regular physical activity a part of every day. Go for a walk every morning or every evening before dinner. Treat yourself to an exercycle and ride every day while reading a favourite book or magazine. |

Weather conditions

- Develop a set of regular activities that are always available regardless of weather (indoor cycling, aerobic dance, indoor swimming, calisthenics, stair climbing, rope skipping, mall walking, dancing, gymnasium games, etc.)
- Look on outdoor activities that depend on weather conditions (cross-country skiing, outdoor swimming, outdoor tennis, etc.) as “bonuses”—extra activities possible when weather and circumstances permit.

Travel

- Put a jump rope in your suitcase and jump rope.
- Walk the halls and climb the stairs in hotels.
- Stay in places with swimming pools or exercise facilities.
- Join the YMCA or YWCA (ask about reciprocal membership agreement).
- Visit the local shopping mall and walk for half an hour or more.
- Bring a small tape recorder and your favourite aerobic exercise tape.

Family obligations

- Trade babysitting time with a friend, neighbour, or family member who also has small children.
- Exercise with the kids—go for a walk together, play tag or other running games, get an aerobic dance or exercise tape for kids (there are several on the market) and exercise together. You can spend time together and still get your exercise.
- Hire a babysitter and look at the cost as a worthwhile investment in your physical and mental health.
- Jump rope, do calisthenics, ride a stationary bicycle, or use other home gymnasium equipment while the kids are busy playing or sleeping.
- Try to exercise when the kids are not around (e.g., during school hours or their nap time).
- Encourage exercise facilities to provide child care services.

Notes:

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Where to Find Information

If you are interested in finding out about walking programs, groups, routes, walking partners, events or other information in your area, contact your local recreation centre, town/city hall, YM/YWCA, or private fitness facility.

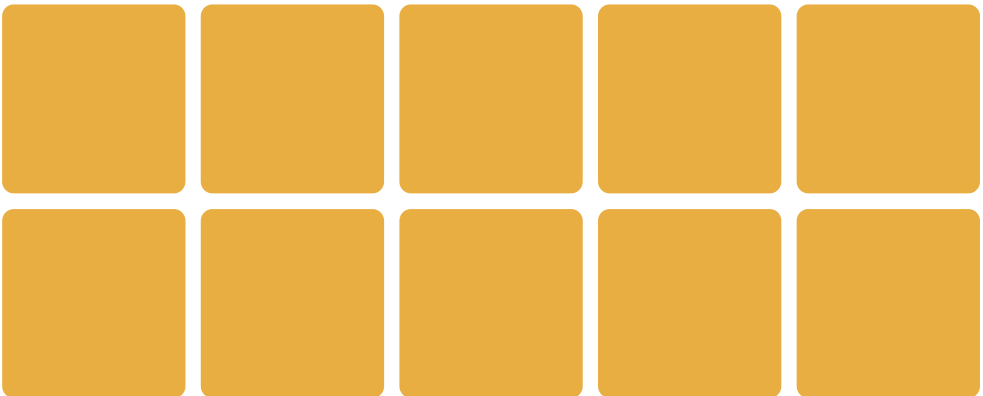
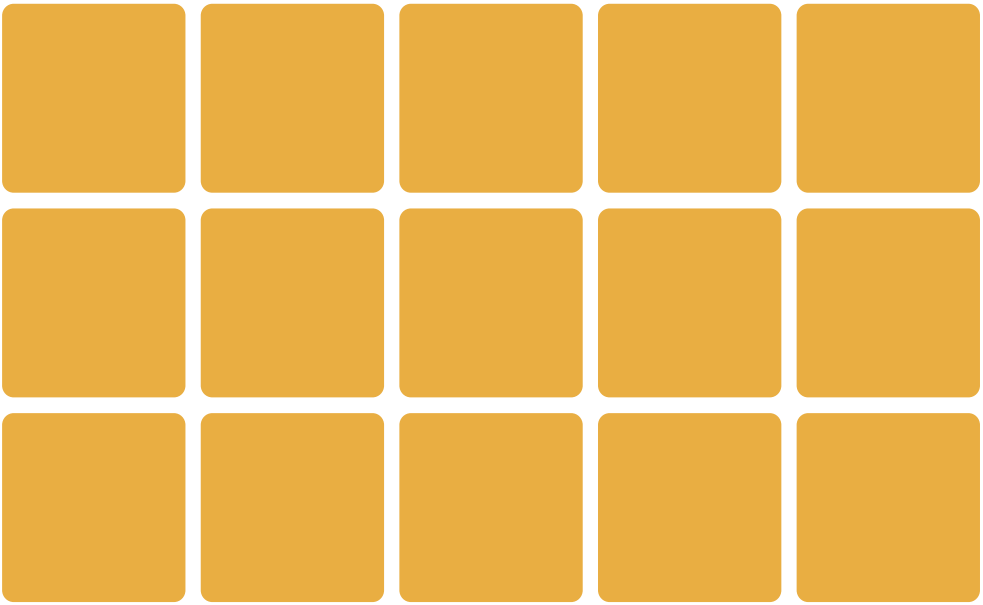
Ways to Get Active in Your Community

Get connected to a tracking program. Log your steps electronically through the ActNow BC Activity Challenge. www.actnowbc.ca

Find out what is going on in your community by contacting your local recreation centre or the BC Recreation and Parks Association Active Communities Initiative. www.activecommunities.bc.ca

Contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC and Yukon Hearts in Motion Walking Club.
1.800.473.4636

Get involved with Sun Run training through SportMed BC. www.sportmedbc.com



BC RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION
101-4664 LOUGHEED HIGHWAY
BURNABY, BC V5C 5T5
TEL 604.629.0965 FAX 604.629.2651
bcrpa@bcrpa.bc.ca

