

# Starting a Walking Routine:

## Take it One Step at a Time

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With the warmer weather, we understand that a walk around the block or with the dog in a trail can be much more appealing than going to the gym. Though we are firm believers in a balanced wellness routine that includes strength training, cardio, core, and stretching, walking is an excellent way to add in daily movement, maintain a healthy weight, and increase energy levels. It can also be a great way to disconnect from the daily life stresses and prioritize self care.

Whether you are looking to start a new fitness routine or add a bit more activity into your current one, walking is a simple way to make that happen. Before tying up the laces and heading out the door, we think we can help you with a few tips to make sure you start your walking routine off on the right foot:

### 1. Start smart

If you have not been active in recent months, you are going to want to start off with shorter walks at a slower pace. A great place to start is to walk 20-30 minutes three to four times per week for the first few weeks while you get used to the new weekly routine and to allow your body to make the proper adaptations to avoid injury. After about a month consider adding 2-5 minutes per week of walking until you have reached your goal walking session time. If you feel any pain early on in your program, consider consulting a doctor and/or making necessary gear upgrades (i.e. new walking shoes).

### 2. Warm up

If you are doing your walk at the end of the day, chances are you have been seated at work or in meetings all day and your body is going to appreciate a bit of a transition. When you head out for your daily walk, take the first 5 minutes to ease into your pace and incorporate a mix of calf raises, leg swings and toe touches. Your body will thank you and this will help us stay consistent in the long run!

### 3. Be mindful of your form

Though we all walk hundreds of steps per day and may not think about the way we do it, there are certainly best practices when it comes to our walking technique. The first thing we recommend focusing on is your head position and making sure to look forward (about 20 feet) and not at the ground right in front of you. Second, maintain a tall posture by gently (cont.)

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engaging your core and keeping your shoulders back and chest up. Next, keep your elbows bent at about 90 degrees and swing from the shoulder. Lastly, aim to keep your steps and stride shorter than you are used to as this will help you avoid impact on your knees. An easy way to incorporate some technique into your walking progression, is to use the first 5-10 minutes after your warm-up to focus on technique.

## 4. Be mindful of your cadence

Adding on to the idea of keeping your steps and stride shorter, being mindful of the steps you take per minute will also help you stay injury free and help you achieve a nice aerobic pace for your walks. With that in mind, the target we encourage you to strive for on your walks is between 100 and 130 steps per minute. To help you keep on track, we encourage you to either use a metronome which will beep to keep you on pace or to count the steps you take on one leg for 30 seconds - if you are between 25 to 32 steps in 30 seconds counting only one leg, you are right on pace!

## 5. Add variety (hills and intervals)

Once you have a few weeks under your belt of walking, we would recommend reserving one or two of your weekly walks to add some variety into the mix. One option would be to seek out nearby elevation and hills, as you will naturally add in a bit more intensity for an even better cardiovascular workout (i.e., improved results). Additionally, you can also add a few intervals to your walks and reap the same rewards. This can be accomplished by reserving 10 to 14 minutes of your walk whereby you walk at a fast pace for 1 minute, and then follow it up with a 1 minute easy walk, repeating this sequence for the time you allotted for the intervals.

## 6. End with a stretch

As you cross the finish line on your walk, taking a few minutes to stretch out anything that feels tight and achy will do your body wonders. Keep the stretches simple and target your shoulders, quads, hamstrings and calves. This simple practice will ensure you feel invigorated for the rest of your day and ready for the next walk.