

# Stroll with a stroller

## Info Sheet

### A guide to setting up pram walking groups

**Are you a new mum who wants to start exercising but has no-one to go with? Do you have a new baby but sometimes feel isolated at home? If this could be you, then here's a solution – a pram walking group!**

Groups of new mums are getting together for exercise and to talk and have fun – while they walk their babies. This is what a pram walking group could do for you:

- increase your self-esteem and energy
- improve your sleep
- improve your cardiovascular fitness
- help you to lose weight and tone muscles
- decrease depression and anxiety
- reduce your risk of osteoporosis, high blood pressure and diabetes and lower your cholesterol levels
- get you out of the house and meeting other people so that you feel less isolated
- save you money because it is free and baby-friendly too!

*"Meeting other people, getting out of the house, I didn't know anybody in this area when I had the baby, it's nice to meet people in the same area with babies the same age"* **Nurragingy Reserve pram walking participant.**

#### When can I start to walk after the birth of my baby?

After the birth of your baby, you'll usually spend the first weeks resting and getting used to the new role of mothering. The birth of your baby represents great changes for you, both physically and mentally, so you need to give yourself time to adapt. Depending on your delivery – whether you had a caesarean, a tear or an episiotomy – allow yourself time for healing. Most new mums feel like beginning or returning to exercise between four and six weeks after the birth. Each person is different, though, so listen to your body and exercise when you feel ready.

#### What should I take?

- A pram or a stroller, or a baby sling if you prefer.
- A hat and sunscreen.
- Ways of protecting your baby from the sun. Babies sunburn much more easily than adults, so try draping a piece of calico or a bunny rug across the stroller to provide shade.
- If you are breastfeeding you will require more fluid, especially on humid summer days, so carry plenty of water and drink regularly. If you aren't breastfeeding, carry supplies for yourself and your baby.
- Light clothing (if it's cold, wear several light layers so you can remove them as you warm up), comfortable and supportive walking shoes, and a supportive bra.

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# Step-by-step guide to setting up a pram walking group

## Step 1

### Decide who is going to conduct the pram walking group.

It could be:

- staff from local community centres, for example, an Early Childhood Nurse/Generalist Community Nurse
- interested people from mothers' groups
- interested people from ethnic community groups, or
- other community groups.

## Step 2

### Promote the pram walking group.

Select a starting date that allows you two or three weeks to recruit participants. Plan to walk at a time that suits most walkers, remembering that some mothers may also have children at school or preschool. Consider the time of year as summer is very hot and humid – morning walks seem to be preferred for pram walking.

You can promote the group by:

- placing a flyer on the noticeboard at your Early Childhood Centre, library, or shopping centre
- recruiting women who attend new mothers' groups or playgroups
- placing a free ad in the local newspaper (community noticeboard section)
- engaging the help of specialist health workers (i.e. Ethnic Health Worker) in your Community Health Centre.

## Step 3

### Map out the walking path the group will take.

When choosing the walk consider:

- the width and condition of the path, and whether it allows two or more mothers with prams to walk beside each other
- any road crossings on the route (keep these to a minimum if possible)
- a starting point that is accessible for parking and strollers
- shade or shelter, and a seat for feeding, preferably at the starting point
- whether the walk feels safe and how isolated it is
- whether the route is pleasant to walk – waterside walks are particularly appealing as are streets with gardens or a park to walk through
- accessibility by public transport
- whether clean, convenient toilets are available.

Test the walk with a friend before the group begins to make sure the path is in good condition and pram-friendly. Walks that form a circuit in a park or around a lake, allow you to stop if you need to – while others continue without fear of being left behind.

## Step 4

### Lets walk!

Walks should go for at least 30 minutes to ensure you get enough exercise. You should still be able to talk comfortably as you walk. When you start, do five to seven minutes of slower walking as a warm-up, before you reach your usual pace. At the end of the walk, stretch calves, thighs, and arms for a hold of 20 seconds. Be careful not to over-stretch. Hormones which helped your joints and ligaments soften and stretch for the birth may still be circulating for up to six months after your baby is born, and your joints may be looser than they usually are.

## Step 5

### Keep it going.

Keep people interested in your pram walking group by:

- encouraging new mothers to join
- taking a friendly, fun approach that will encourage everyone to take part
- welcoming all new mothers to the group and introducing everyone
- ensuring that everyone walks with a partner at a walking speed that suits both of them
- organising varied social activities (e.g. finish at a café, picnics etc.)
- remaining flexible and inviting friends, and other family members along.

**A joint initiative of NSW Health, Western Sydney Area Health Service, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, NSW Department of Women and Australian Catholic University.**