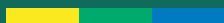


Active Community

NSW Department of Sport and Recreation  
Active Community Guide

# Facts on Walking



13 13 02  
[www.dsr.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au)





An active way of life is important for all of us and becomes more important as we grow older. Walking at a comfortable speed improves heart-lung function. It is also good for general fitness as well as being safe, cheap and convenient. It can be enjoyed alone or with friends.

## Walking is good for you

If you walk regularly you tend to:

- Feel more confident, happy and relaxed
- Control your weight better
- Have a healthier blood cholesterol level
- Have lower blood pressure
- Have stronger bones (less osteoporosis)
- Be less likely to have a heart attack
- Recover better from a heart attack
- Be less likely to have a stroke
- Be less likely to develop diabetes in middle age.

**How often** Try to walk everyday. Ideally, adults should get a total of 30 minutes or more of moderate exercise – like walking – on most (preferably all) days of the week. The more exercise you can do the better – providing you follow the steps outlined here.

**How hard** Find the level that suits you best. You should still be able to talk (or whistle) comfortably as you walk.



## Getting started

Walking is a great social activity. You can walk with a friend, join a club or you may prefer to walk alone. Whatever you do, the aim is for comfort and enjoyment while keeping active.

Before getting started, see your doctor if you:

- Have not been active for some time
- Have a history of heart disease or chest pains
- Have diabetes
- Are very overweight
- Are a smoker
- Have high blood pressure.

## Staying motivated

- Walk with a friend, in a group or with your spouse and family
- Use the times you walk to think – and relax
- Plan your walks in advance
- Vary your walks
- Visit a national park or an historical landmark
- Visit a friend
- Walk the dog
- Join a walking club.



## 10 important tips

1. Wear a broad brimmed hat and sunglasses, and use a broad spectrum sunscreen SPF15+ on exposed skin. Avoid the hottest times of the day, and keep to shaded areas.
2. Wear light, loose, comfortable clothing and well cushioned flat-soled shoes.
3. Always let someone know where you are going and your expected time of return.
4. Walk steadily, concentrating on a steady heel toe action, letting your arms swing freely by your sides. After a while, you will develop the rhythm and stride most natural for your weight and height.
5. If you are going on a long or strenuous walk, drink water before you start and carry a supply with you, especially in hot weather. A small backpack is useful for carrying water, sunglasses, sunscreen and other items.
6. If your breathing becomes uncomfortable, slow down, and try not to stop completely if you have been walking briskly. Sudden halting can cause a feeling of dizziness as oxygenated blood drops with gravity away from the brain.
7. In cold weather, a hat prevents heat loss from the head.
8. Avoid walking immediately after meals and don't walk if you have a fever or a bad cold.
9. If you are walking in the dark, wear light coloured clothing so motorists can easily see you.
10. You may feel some soreness in the early stages of your program, as your body adjusts to new demands being placed upon it. As your body adapts, the soreness will decrease. In addition, stretching before and after exercise can help to minimise soreness.



## Stretching

It is desirable to stretch both before and after you go on your walk. Try the stretches below and remember you should always be warm before stretching.

- Ease into, hold and ease out of each stretch
  - Hold each stretch for a minimum of 20 seconds
  - Stretching should never be painful, although you may feel a mild discomfort
  - Never bounce while stretching
  - Perform stretches on both legs.
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- ⦿ Prop leg against a tree or chair at a comfortable height with knee slightly bent, lean slowly forward to feel the stretch at the back of the thigh. See picture above right.
  - ⦿ Stand with hands placed on wall for support. Put one leg behind keeping heel flat on ground. Keep other leg slightly bent with weight on back leg. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat with other leg. See picture above centre.
  - ⦿ Sit on chair with both feet on floor. Turn arms, head and shoulder to grasp the back of the chair. Keep buttocks on chair. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat on other side.
  - ⦿ Bring heel to bottom and push hip forward to increase stretch. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat on other leg. See picture above left.



## Sore feet

Your most important equipment is a pair of sturdy, comfortable lightweight walking shoes. If your feet feel good, you will walk well – and continue walking. When choosing the right walking shoes, check for:

- Upper of breathable material – leather and/or nylon mesh
- Comfortable, padded heel collar
- Firm heel counter (that cups the heel)
- Stability for the entire foot and leg
- Heel should be held in the shoe, well cushioned and supported somewhat higher than the rest of the foot
- Entire shoe should be designed to absorb shock
- Substantial arch supports
- A sole designed specifically for smooth heel-to-toe motion
- The toe box should allow ample room.

## After a heart attack

If you have recently had a heart attack or heart surgery, exercise will play an important part in your recovery. Walking is safe and easy and you can begin with an easy stroll twice a day during the week after you leave hospital. Use the chart below as your guide to getting into a regular walking program. But talk it over with your doctor first.

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>DISTANCE</b>	<b>PER DAY</b>	<b>SPEED</b>
1	5–10	250m	2	Stroll
2	10–15	500m	2	Comfortable
3	15–20	1000m	2	Comfortable
4	20–25	1500m	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out
5	25–30	2000m	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out
6	30	2500m	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out



# Walking For Pleasure

Walking For Pleasure is a NSW Department of Sport and Recreation program which promotes regular walking with a walking for pleasure club. The groups walk in locations such as national parks, places of historical interest and beaches.

Participating in a Walking For Pleasure club is:

- Enjoyable
- Social
- Easy
- Accessible
- Healthy
- FREE to join.

Walking For Pleasure clubs have been set up all over New South Wales and people participate in regular walks on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Most Walking For Pleasure clubs start with a meeting of interested people and clubs operate on a casual basis, with members deciding where and when they want to walk.

There's a Walking For Pleasure club near you and it's FREE to join! Phone 13 13 02.

Other useful contacts:

- Bushwalking Clubs of NSW
- Department of Land and Water Conservation
- National Parks and Wildlife
- National Heart Foundation
- NSW Department of Health.

Also, some councils, leisure centres, neighbourhood and community centres may have community walking groups that walk in local areas.

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