



Week One: Ready, set, walk!

Even if you're a certified couch potato, getting active doesn't have to be hard. It can also help you outwit heart disease, the No. 1 killer of all Americans. Cycling, jogging, swimming, skiing, aerobic dancing and dozens of other activities can help your heart. But **walking** is an easy way to get started! The American Heart Association recommends a total of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week.

That's not as hard as it may sound. Start slowly. Gradually build up, with the goal of being active on most or all days of the week.

Step your way to success

If you've been sedentary for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of heart disease or another chronic health problem, talk to your doctor before you start a walking program. To get started:

- **Try to walk at the same time of day** so it becomes part of your lifestyle. You might walk every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from noon to 12:30 p.m.
- **Find a convenient time and place.** Try to make walking a habit, but be flexible. If you miss an opportunity for physical activity, don't give up. Work activity into your day another way.
- **Find a companion.** You're more likely to stick with it if you have a buddy.
- **Wear comfortable, properly fitting sneakers** or flat shoes with laces and comfortable, loose-fitting clothing.
- **Look for chances to be more active during the day.** Walk the mall before shopping, take the stairs instead of the escalator or take 10–15 minute breaks while watching TV or sitting for walking or some other activity.
- **Keep yourself accountable** but cut yourself some slack if you stop for a while. Get started again gradually and work up to your old pace.
- **Already a walker and you want to pick up the pace?** Tack another mile onto your regular route, try a more challenging path or add an extra day of the week.
- **Track and celebrate your successes.** Visit StartWalkingNow.org to find American Heart Association-designated walking paths, personalized walking plans, an online community of walkers and more. Record the distance or length of time of your activity and how you feel after each session. Reward yourself at special milestones. Nothing motivates like success!