

Commonly Asked Questions about Physical Activity

Q: What are the most popular physical activities among adults?

A: The most popular physical activities among adults are walking and gardening or yard work.

Q: How much exercise should I do?

A: The Surgeon General recommends that all children and adults should accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, or preferably all, days of the week. For most, walking is the easiest and best form of exercise. Intermittent or shorter bouts of activity (at least 10 minutes) have similar cardiovascular and health benefits.

Q: How much physical activity is required to see a training effect?

A: 30 minutes of regular moderate physical activity such as walking has been found to be effective for producing a training effect. The more one does, however, the more beneficial the impact.

Q: What are the benefits of regular walking?

A: Regular walking reduces stress, anxiety, and depression as well as the risk of premature mortality, coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes mellitus. Walking is also important for the health and maintenance of muscles, bones, and joints. Furthermore, regular moderate-intensity walking improves the functioning of the metabolic, endocrine, and immune systems of the body.

Q: Is it safe for me to walk?

A: Light to moderate-intensity walking is generally safe. However, you should not exercise until checking with your doctor if you have: heart disease, diabetes, any new undiagnosed symptom, chest pain, irregular, rapid, or fluttery heart beat, severe shortness of breath, significant ongoing weight loss that has not been diagnosed, fever, infections, foot or ankle sores that will not heal, and joint swelling.

Q: What is going to help me maintain my walking program or routine?

A:

- Focus on the benefits of walking regularly.
- Walk where you feel safe.
- Join with friends and colleagues you enjoy.
- Walk on a regular basis.
- Walk at times that fit your daily schedule.
- Remember that walking does not impose financial or social costs
- Walking has few negative consequences (few injuries and takes little time).

Q: Does walking have to be a formal or structured activity to benefit health?

A: Walking is wonderful. You can do it anywhere. It does not need to be a of a formal nature or structured activity, but can be undertaken in many common settings, such as in your neighborhood, at the mall, on the trails, before work, at lunch time, etc.

Q: Are there any psychological benefits associated with walking?

A: The psychological benefits of walking include reductions in depression, stress, and anxiety; in addition to enhanced mood, body image, well-being, perceived control and higher levels of self-esteem.

Q: Will walking help me lose weight?

A: Walking plays multiple roles in the prevention and treatment of obesity. Multiple interactions exist between lack of physical activity and obesity. Increased physical activity lowers the risk of obesity, may influence distribution of body weight, and there are a variety of health related benefits even in the absence of weight loss. Body composition can be improved by regular physical activity, which is strongly associated with maintenance of weight loss. Walking is the most convenient and logical way most obese persons can increase their physical activity. Weight control requires commitment, an understanding of eating habits and regular exercise. Accomplishment must be reinforced to sustain motivation.

Q: Is walking only needed for older people?

A: NO! Walking is for everyone and can be beneficial at any age, especially youth. There are many benefits to maintaining an active lifestyle. The benefits include looking better, maintaining one's ideal body weight, feeling better, having more energy, preventing osteoporosis, decreasing susceptibility to falls, and decreasing susceptibility to heart disease, breast cancer, colon cancer and other chronic diseases. Physical activity and exercise can decrease the symptoms of arthritis.

Q: Is it better to walk alone or with a partner?

A: It is usually a matter of personal preference. Walking with someone or in a group provides company, encouragement, and another venue to socialize with friends or meet new people. Making a date to walk with a friend or colleague prevents other things from getting in the way. However, walking alone allows you the flexibility to change the time, place, type, and intensity of your exercise at your convenience.

Q: Is walking safe for an individual that has a family history of heart disease or heart attacks?

A: Checking with your doctor is always a good idea if you are at risk. However, increased physical activity is associated with reduced coronary heart disease (CHD) risk and mortality. This protection against CHD may partially be explained by the increase in HDL-C levels observed following regular moderate physical activity. Favorable changes in HDL-C become significant at approximately 7-10 miles per week. Moderate to low intensity walking is recommended if you have heart disease because such exercise carries a lower risk for cardiac complications and injury.

Q: Will regular walking comprise the immune system of a relatively healthy individual?

A: Moderate intensity walking will not adversely affect the immune system and may have a beneficial effect on the interleukin-2/natural killer cell system. By increasing daily walking, individuals may experience stress-reducing benefits, which may further enhance the immune system.