

# Walking for Exercise

Walking is an effective form of exercise that can be safely performed by most people. There are a few things you should know before starting a walking program:

- Make an appointment with your doctor before planning a fitness walking routine to discuss your fitness level with her if you haven't been doing regular exercise.
- Decide what your specific fitness goals are. For example, you may want to lose weight, walk a 5 kilometer race or improve your cardiovascular health. Write your goals down so you can track progress.
- Purchase a good pair of walking shoes and comfortable exercise clothing.
- Buy a pedometer to track the number of miles you've walked and the calories you've burned. Check with your local sporting goods store to find a pedometer.
- Plan an increased progression of walking activity. If you haven't exercised in awhile, start out slowly and increase mileage each week.
- Incorporate walking activity into your daily routine. Walk during your lunch hour, walk the dog an extra block and park your car farther away from the store. Monitor your walking miles with your pedometer and make new goals.
- Monitor your walking progression to ensure you're meeting your fitness goals and staying motivated.
- Increase walking intensity slowly to prevent injuries.
- Add variety to your routine by find new terrain to walk on and taking different routes for your daily walks. You'll stay more motivated and see new sights as well.
- Increase your weekly mileage no more than 10 to 15 percent per week to prevent injury. In other words: If you walked one half a mile per day in the first week, you should walk no more than 6 tenths of a mile per day the following week.

If you don't want to bother with keeping track of mileage, use time as a guide. For instance: If you walk for 10 minutes (after a 2 minute warm up of stretching or jumping jacks, etc) per day during the first week, walk 12 minutes the following week; 15 minutes per day the next week; 20 minutes the next week, etc up to 45 minutes per day (The cardiovascular benefit gained after the first 45 minutes of exercise is negligible until you reach the 2 to 2.5 hour mark, and most people don't have that kind of time to exercise on a daily basis!).

The most important thing is to have fun. If you can gain fitness in the process: All the better!