



HOW TO START A **WALKING PROGRAM** WITHOUT HURTING YOURSELF



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Walking is a great exercise. It gets you outdoors in nature, is often social when you walk with someone else, is good for your heart and circulation, good for your muscles and bones and for reducing anxiety and stress.

However, many people walk further than their bodies can carry them, resulting in back pain, hip pain and knee pain during or after their walks. This guide will show you how to start a walking program safely and effectively for health and longevity – without hurting yourself.

WALKING

A basic movement of humans that can be used to eliminate the pain in your back, hips and knees and fend off the mental and physical effects of aging.

When most people consider a walking program, they think of going for a 1-2 hour or longer walk or hike on the weekends. Long weekend hikes are not a walking program. This is more likely to hurt than help if your muscles are not up to the task of carrying your body for that length of time.

You build a walking program like you build any fitness program. You start gradually and build slowly. If you exceed your strength capacity, you'll end up in pain.

Start with a test run. You can use your step counter or set a time limit. For example, start with a 30-minute brisk walk and see how you feel the next day. If you're not feeling any increase in pain or stiffness, you've found your starting point.

You'll begin by walking 30 minutes (your time may be different) three to five times a week on level ground. It's important to have a day or two off each week as recovery days, because these are the days the muscles build strength. If you keep overstraining your muscles by exceeding their capacity, strength gains will be considerably less.

After 2 weeks, you can add some gentle slopes and hills to your walking route.

After 4 weeks, you can increase your walking time by ten minutes to 40 minutes. Stay at 40 minutes for 2 to 4 weeks, then increase your time by another 10 minutes. If at any time your symptoms increase, back your walking time off for a week or two before increasing again.

Walk briskly, let your arms swing naturally, and there'll be less stress on your joints. Slow walking results in poor posture and more compression load on your spine, hips, and knees resulting in pain and stiffness.

Don't forget to breathe deep into your belly as you walk. This activates your diaphragm – your most important but often forgotten, core muscle that provides additional support to your spine.

Try this walking program but give it time to see results. If you need more help, get in touch with us.

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