

# Starting a Home Walking Program

Walking is one of the best ways to be active. It gives you more benefits than just about any other exercise and you can do it almost anywhere. Even better, you can do it in 10-minute chunks of time. That means with just 30 minutes a day, you can walk your way to better health.

## Why is walking important to my health?

Regular exercise helps you:

- Prevent or manage serious health conditions like heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- Improve vital body functions including memory, balance, and bone strength.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Reduce stress and depression, increase energy, and improve sleep.

## How do I get started?

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate intensity activity per week. This equals 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week. If you cannot walk for 30 minutes all at once, don't worry! You can build up to it by starting slow and doing a little more each week.

## What is "moderate intensity"?

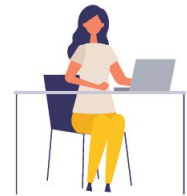
Moderate intensity is when your heart beats faster and you breathe harder than normal but you can still talk. Intensity is measured by the way you feel, or your **perceived exertion**.

The Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale is a way to show how hard you are working. When you start walking, aim for a level 4. Slowly increase your time or distance to get to a level 6. Then, stay at that level of activity.

### Rate of perceived exertion = how you feel when you are active

#### Level 1: Very light activity.

Working at your desk or dusting. Not much effort. Easy to breathe and talk.



#### Levels 2 to 3: Light activity.

Yoga, light gardening, vacuuming, a slow stroll. Easy to breathe and talk.



#### Levels 4 to 6: Moderate activity.

Walking at a good pace. Easy bike ride. Harder to breathe. Can still talk.



#### Level 7 to 8: Vigorous activity.

Walking uphill, playing tennis, jogging. Breathing hard. Can speak a sentence.



#### Level 9: Very hard activity.

Running, hiking uphill. Breathing really hard. Can barely speak.



#### Level 10: Maximum effort.

Mountain climbing. Really hard to maintain. Out of breath. Cannot speak.



## What about safety?

There is very little risk of injury from walking, but you still need to consider a few things.

- During the summer, try to walk during the cooler parts of the day. During the winter, walk in areas that are free of snow and ice. Walk indoors if the air quality is bad.
- Talk to your doctor if you have had heart trouble, chest pain, high blood pressure, dizziness, or if you're starting to exercise for the first time.

## What's stopping you?

If you are having trouble getting started, think about the reasons why.

- Pick something you want to do.
- Be honest with yourself about what you are ready to work on.
- Then, write down your plan below.

Ask for help or support where you need it.

### 1 **Make a Plan.** Planning out the details will help you succeed.

#### Pick a small step

Pick a small step toward your goal.

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Connect this step to a prompt or reminder.

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#### Prepare

What resources could help? (Time? A class? An app?)

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Who will support you? (A friend? A family member? A support group?)

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What changes to your environment would help?

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#### Think ahead

What might get in the way or make this harder?

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What can you do when that happens?

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What will inspire you to keep going?

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### 2 **Act and Track.** Try out your step for a defined period.

Start date: \_\_\_\_\_ How will you keep track of what you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: \_\_\_\_\_ Who will you be accountable to? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 **Reflect and Adjust.** You can learn from whatever happens. There's no failure if you keep learning. Adjust your plan and keep going.

How did it go, and what did you learn? \_\_\_\_\_

What will be your next small step? \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure to celebrate what you did and what you learned!

Keep trying and learning!