

OAWH

Older Adults and Walking for Health



NICE

National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly

Initiative nationale pour le soin des personnes âgées

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www.nicenet.ca

Older Adults and Walking for Health

Older adults should take part in at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous activity each week. A walking program is an inexpensive, easy and convenient way to improve overall well-being and to enhance quality of life.

What are the Benefits of Walking?

Increasing physical activity through walking can help with:

- decreasing blood glucose levels
- decreasing systolic blood pressure
- reducing the risk of coronary heart disease
- reducing high cholesterol
- reducing body fat
- bone density
- flexibility
- osteoarthritis

What is a pedometer?

- a device that tracks number of steps taken
- some pedometers simply measure steps
- some pedometers track distance walked and calories burned

What Does a Pedometer Do?

- provides immediate feedback on number of steps taken
- measures current activity level
- assists in tracking and setting goals over time to help increase physical activity

What are the Limitations of a Pedometer?

- does not measure *intensity* of physical activity
- does not measure *duration* of physical activity

Using a Pedometer

- test pedometer: clip on belt, walk twenty steps, stop and check pedometer for accuracy
- wear pedometer for one week
- track and record step count at end of each day
- after seven days add daily steps and divide total number of steps from that week by seven
- this number is the *baseline* number of steps needed for walking program

Recommendations for Daily Step Goals¹

The average sedentary North American accumulates approximately 3,500 – 5,000 steps each day. Research suggests that, in general, the average North American should increase their daily walking activity to approximately 7,000 – 10,000 per day. The guide below will help determine an individual's current activity level based on their daily walking activity.

If total daily steps are:

- under 5,000 per day - categorized as having a sedentary lifestyle
- between 5,000 & 7,499 per day - categorized as “low active”
- between 7,500 & 9,999 - categorized as “somewhat active”
- 12,500 or more - categorized as “highly active”

¹ Government of Ontario, *Active 2010 (2005). Using Your Pedometer.*

Starting a Walking Program

Prior to beginning a walking program an assessment of physical readiness from a regulated health professional is strongly recommended. A health professional can recommend a walking program tailored according to the limitations imposed by chronic disease or disability.

A Sample Walking Program²

- choose level that best matches current physical activity level

Level 1: this program is for people who are currently inactive

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minutes walking	15	18	20	25	30	32	35	40	42	45
Walks per week	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6-7

Km goal: start at Week 1 with approximately 1 km and work up to about 4 km by Week 10

Steps per day using pedometer: establish baseline. Increase number of steps by 500 each week until goal reached

Level 2: this program is for people who are physically active on a regular basis

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Minutes walking	30	32	35	40	42	45	45	50	55	60
Walks per week	3	3	4	4	5	5	6	6	6-7	6-7

² Government of Ontario, Active 2010 (2005). Using Your Pedometer.

Km goal: start at Week 1 with about 2 km and work up to about 8 km by Week 10

Steps per day using pedometer: establish baseline.
Increase number of steps by 500 each week until goal reached

Weekly Walking Log

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For more information on NICE or any of the
NICE tools, please visit www.nicenet.ca

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