Walking tips

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Walking is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages and abilities. Start your walking program gradually, increasing length and pace as you get used to it. The following suggestions may help you to incorporate regular walking into your lifestyle.

**General walking tips**

If you have not walked distances for some time, you should start slowly. Increase the length and pace of your walk gradually. Here are some tips on how to get started and how to prepare for walking.

- **Warm-up activity** – start slowly, do a few warm-up exercises and stretches first. Don’t walk immediately after a big meal.
- **Build activity slowly** – start with a 20 minute walk then increase gradually. Try to walk at least three times per week.
- **Use the correct technique** – walk at a steady pace, swing your arms freely and stand as straight as you can. Your feet should step in a rolling action from the heel to the toe.
- **Shoes and socks** – wear thick comfortable cotton socks. Sensible, comfortable and lightweight shoes with support are best.
- **Weather** – wear suitable warm, light clothing in the winter and cool, comfortable clothes in the summer. Don’t forget your sunscreen and hat.
- **Water** – drink water before and after your walk. Take water with you on your walk, especially in warm weather.
- **Cool down** – make sure you cool down after a long fast walk. Do a few stretching exercises.

**Walking tips for children**

Statistics show that Australian children are living increasingly sedentary lives. Suggestions on encouraging your child to enjoy regular walks include:

- If your child finds television and computer games more interesting than exercise, consider getting them a dog. Your child’s desire to love and care for the animal may encourage them to take it on regular walks. Remember, though, that dogs aren’t permitted in most national parks and other conservation reserves.
- Boost your child’s interest in outdoor activities by visiting some of Victoria’s scenic areas and organising fun activities, such as sailing on Albert Park Lake or camping for the weekend at Wilsons Promontory National Park.
- Encourage your child’s interest in nature through books and websites, then follow-up with ‘field trips’ so they can discover their favourite animals or plants for themselves (and enjoy the health benefits of walking at the same time).
- Schedule a regular family walk – this is a great way to pass on healthy habits to your children and spend time together, while getting fit at the same time.
- When walking with children, make sure the route and length of time spent walking is appropriate to their age. Approximately 1km per birthday is a good rule of thumb.
For example, a four year old can be expected to walk up to 4km, with plenty of rest breaks.

- Start good habits early. Take young babies and toddlers for walks in their pram. As they get older, encourage them to walk part of the way.
- Look for self-guided nature walks, which have been set up in many parks. Younger children enjoy looking for the next numbered post; older ones can learn about the plants and animals of the park, and perhaps take photos or record their experience in other ways.

### Walking tips for seniors

Regular weight-bearing exercise can improve cardiovascular fitness and bone strength, reduce excess body fat and boost muscle power. Walking is an excellent form of exercise for the elderly, since it is low impact, free and high in health benefits. Suggestions include:

- See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program, particularly if you are overweight, haven’t exercised in a long time or suffer from a chronic medical condition.
- Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of a experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or ‘safety net’ to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you. Print a copy of the pre-exercise screening tool and discuss it with your doctor or exercise professional.
- Contact Parks Victoria on 13 1963 or visit www.parks.vic.gov.au for information on suitable parks and reserves in your area. Issues to consider include access, terrain and the number of park benches.
- Consider joining a walking club specific to your needs and age group.
- Consider starting up a walking club of your own with friends and neighbours.

### Walking tips for people with disabilities

People with disabilities will also benefit from regular exercise. Suggestions include:

- See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program.
- Parks Victoria can provide information about which parks and reserves offer special access (such as wheelchair access) and facilities. Check their website, as many parks have been given an accessibility rating, or call 13 1963.
- VICSRAPID – Victorian Sport and Recreation Association for Intellectual Disability – runs sporting and recreational programs for people with disabilities (particularly intellectual disabilities) of all ages.
- An able-bodied person can help someone with a disability to better enjoy their neighbourhood walk or bush walk. For example, a sighted companion can warn a vision-impaired person of upcoming obstacles.
- National parks allow guide dogs, although domestic dogs, cats and other pets are strictly forbidden.

### Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local council
- Heart Foundation Walking Groups Tel. 13 11 12 to find a group in your local area
- Parks Victoria Information Centre Tel. 13 1963
- VICSRAPID Victorian Sport and Recreation Association for Intellectual Disability Tel. (03)9926 1380
- Bushwalking Victoria Tel. (03) 8846 4131

### Things to remember

- Walking is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages and abilities.
- Prepare for a walk by warming up, wearing the correct clothing and shoes, and making sure that you are well hydrated. Warm down after a walk.
- See your doctor for a medical check-up before embarking on any new fitness program, particularly if you are obese, haven’t exercised in a long time or suffer from a chronic medical condition.

### References

- Parks Victoria, Australia. More information here.
- Walking for pleasure, NSW Department of Sport and Recreation, Australia. More information here.

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Keeping active

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- Keeping active basics
- Getting started
- Staying fit and motivated
- Exercise safety and injury prevention
- Healthy eating and exercise
- Keeping active throughout life
- Health conditions and exercise

Keeping active basics

- Balancing energy in and energy out

A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance...

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- **Body mass index (BMI)**
  Body mass index or BMI is an approximate measure of your total body fat.

- **Energy in food (kilojoules and calories)**
  A kilojoule is a unit of measure of energy, in the same way that kilometres measure distance.

- **Exercise intensity**
  If you can talk but not sing, you’re exercising at the right intensity.

- **Exercise in your local surroundings (video)**
  Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up.

- **Exercise - the low-down on hydration**
  You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise.

- **Exercise with a friend**
  Exercise is important for your physical and mental health. Working out with a friend means you’re more likely to have fun and stick to your exercise plan.

- **Fitness centres - how to choose one**
  Do some research before signing up at a fitness centre.

- **How to make exercise fun (slideshow)**
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off.

- **Kids and energy needs**
  It’s important for kids to eat a wide variety of foods for a healthy, well-balanced diet and to be physically active. Creating healthy habits during childhood helps to ensure lifelong healthy.

- **Personal trainers – how to choose one**
  Make sure your personal trainer is properly qualified before entering into any agreement.

- **Physical activity for men**
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

- **Physical activity for seniors**
  Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease.

- **Physical activity for women**
  If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

- **Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy**
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.

- **Physical activity - it's important**
  Just 30 minutes of moderate activity each day can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing certain conditions or diseases.

- **Physical activity - setting yourself goals**
  When you’re trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals.

- **Physical activity - what's your excuse?**
  There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day.

- **Resistance training – health benefits**
  If you do resistance training repeatedly and consistently, your muscles become stronger.

- **Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)**
  Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

### Getting started

- **Exercise programs**
  If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging.

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• Exercise - the low-down on hydration
  You need to drink enough and regularly to keep hydrated during exercise.

• Exercise with a friend
  Exercise is important for your physical and mental health. Working out with a friend means you’re more likely to have fun and stick to your exercise plan.

• Gardening for children
  Children can learn new skills, have fun and develop self-confidence when they grow their own plants.

• Gardening for health - starting out
  Gardening is a healthy activity that can be enjoyed by everyone.

• Gardening for older people
  Garden spaces and equipment can be modified or adapted to help older people enjoy gardening.

• Gardening safety
  Gardening is an enjoyable form of exercise, but you need to take care.

• Getting active - tucker talk tips
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term.

• How to make exercise fun (slideshow)
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

• Physical activity - choosing a provider
  Choosing the right fitness centre or service provider requires some research.

• Physical activity – choosing the one for you
  You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you.

• Physical activity for men
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

• Physical activity for seniors
  Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease.

• Physical activity for women
  If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

• Physical activity - how to get active when you are busy
  Even if you’re busy, you still need to find a way to be physically active.

• Physical activity – how to get started
  If you’ve been inactive and want to begin physical activity, see a doctor first.

• Physical activity - learn how to swim (video)
  Swimming is a great low-impact exercise for all ages and abilities. Australian marathon swimmer, Tammy Van Wisse shows ex-AFL (Australian Football League) player and coach, Tom Shaw some swimming.

• Physical activity - overcoming barriers (video)
  Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses.

• Physical activity – overcoming the barriers
  If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend.

• Physical activity – setting yourself goals
  When you’re trying to become more physically active, set realistic health and fitness goals.

Staying fit and motivated

• 10 tips to plan your exercise
  Physical activity won't just happen. Most activities require planning – starting and maintaining a physical activity program does too. Here are some tips for getting ready to exercise: Make...
10 tips to stay active year round

Pick an activity you enjoy...

Exercise and mood

Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again. So it’s important to keep up an exercise...

Exercise - everyday activities

There are lots of everyday activities that provide an opportunity to be active and provide health benefits...

Exercise in your local surroundings (video)

Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

Exercise programs

If you are unfamiliar with what is involved, starting an exercise program can be challenging...

Exercise with a friend

Exercise is important for your physical and mental health. Working out with a friend means you’re more likely to have fun and stick to your exercise plan...

How to make exercise fun (slide show)

Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

Pets can make you healthy (video)

Australians have one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world...

Physical activity – choosing the one for you

You are more likely to keep up a healthy lifestyle change if your chosen activity suits you...

Physical activity for men

Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare...

Physical activity for seniors

Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease...

Physical activity for women

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Swimming is a great low-impact exercise for all ages and abilities. Australian marathon swimmer, Tammy Van Wisse shows ex-AFL (Australian Football League) player and coach, Tony Shaw some swimming...

Physical activity - overcoming barriers (video)

Former world aerobics champion, Sue Stanley shows us how to overcome common exercise excuses...

Physical activity – overcoming the barriers

If you think physical activity is boring, try exercising with a friend...

Physical activity - staying active during summer (video)

Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer Sherri Bourne gives us some great tips for staying active over the summer months...

Physical activity - staying motivated

Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

Physical activity - what's your excuse?

There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day...

Stretching exercise in winter (video)

When starting out an exercise program, it's really important to do a warm up and cool down before and after exercise...

Exercise safety and injury prevention

10 tips for safe stretching

Make stretching part of your life...

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
10 tips to exercise safely
Exercising regularly has wide-ranging physical, emotional and social health benefits. You need to exercise safely to remain healthy and injury-free. If it’s safe and painless, you’re more...

Aerobics - preventing injury
Aerobics injuries are usually caused by trauma and overuse, but can be prevented by using the right techniques and equipment...

Australian rules football - preventing injury
Australian rules football is a physical contact sport that often results in injuries from tackling, kicking, running and constant competition for the ball...

Basketball - health benefits
Basketball is a sport enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities...

Basketball - preventing injury
Basketball is a fast game with frequent and aggressive body contacts - injuries can and do occur...

Canoeing and kayaking - health benefits
Canoeing and kayaking can be done as a hobby, a competitive sport or as a fun activity on holidays...

Canoeing and kayaking - preventing injury
Careful preparation and the right equipment can help prevent canoeing and kayaking injuries...

Cricket - health benefits
To play cricket you need to be fit and strong and have good hand-eye coordination and ball-handling skills...

Cricket - preventing injury
Cricket is a very popular sport. Injuries are often caused by overuse, being struck by a cricket ball and falls...

Cycling - health benefits
Cycling can help to protect you from serious diseases...

Cycling - preventing injury
You are much more likely to hurt yourself by falling off your bike or hitting a stationary object than colliding with another vehicle...

Dance - health benefits
Dancing can be a fun way to stay fit for people of all ages and abilities...

Dancing - preventing injury
Dancing is fun and a great form of exercise, but make sure you avoid injuries...

Dog walking - the health benefits
If you are planning to buy a dog, make sure you choose a breed that's appropriate to your lifestyle...

Exercise safety
Training too hard or fast is a common cause of sports-related injuries...

Fishing - preventing injury
Never go fishing alone - always fish with someone else and, ideally, with two other people...

Golf - health benefits
Golf provides a stimulating challenge, combined with a healthy walk in pleasant surroundings...

Golf - preventing injury
The average golfer playing an 18-hole game walks about seven kilometres...

Heat stress and exercise
Heat stress occurs when sweat can't evaporate fast enough to keep the body sufficiently cool during physical activity...

Healthy eating and exercise

Food for sport - tucker talk tips
Carbohydrate is the most important nutrient for athletes...

Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
Experts say the key to living well into our 80s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

- **Sporting performance and food**
  Good nutrition and a healthy diet are essential to improving your sports performance.

- **The amount of physical activity you need**
  It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

### Keeping active throughout life

- **10 tips for active seniors**
  Stay independent for longer with regular exercise – 10 tips for active seniors.

- **Children – keeping them active**
  A young child is naturally active, so build upon their inclinations to use their body.

- **Exercise and stretch in the office (video)**
  Sitting behind a desk all day doesn't mean you can't exercise.

- **Gardens for all – a health activity**
  Gardening has many health and therapeutic benefits, and is an activity that most people can enjoy.

- **Getting active – tucker talk tips**
  The main thing is to choose physical activities that you enjoy and that you can stick to in the long term.

- **Healthy active Koori kids – tucker talk tips**
  Good nutrition and physical exercise help to keep Koori kids healthy and avoid diseases when they get older.

- **Healthy ageing – stay involved**
  Reach out to the world around you for fun, a sense of achievement, social contact and mental stimulation.

- **Healthy and active ageing**
  Being physically active, eating well, socialising and improving your health can help you live a healthy, happy and active life as you get older.

- **How to make exercise fun (slideshow)**
  Many of us find it difficult to stick to some form of exercise, others don’t know where to start. Experts say the key to taking up or keeping to any form of physical activity is to have fun. Get off...

- **How to volunteer and boost your health (slideshow)**
  Volunteering is great for our health – it makes us feel good, while helping others in the process.

- **Older people in hospital – Get well soon**
  Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay.

- **Parent's guide for active girls**
  Physical activity is an important part of health and wellbeing, and girls should remain active as they grow up.

- **Physical activity for men**
  Many men are only motivated to become more active after they have a health scare.

- **Physical activity for seniors**
  Physical activity can help older people maintain independence, recover from illness and reduce their risk of disease.

- **Physical activity for seniors – staying active during summer (video)**
  Physical Activity and Fitness Trainer – Sherri Bourne shares a few easy and low-impact ways for seniors to stay healthy over the summer months.

- **Physical activity for women**
  If you can't make the time to exercise for yourself, do it for your family.

- **Physical activity - what's your excuse?**

  There are many excuses we can come up with to avoid being active, but the truth is there is always a way to fit some physical activity into your day.

- **Postnatal exercise**
  Always consult with your doctor or midwife before starting any postnatal exercise program.
Pregnancy and exercise
Unless you have complications, you should be able to exercise throughout your pregnancy.

Secrets to healthy ageing (slideshow)
Experts say the key to living well into our 90s and 90s is making a commitment to live healthily. Check out these simple ideas and embrace your senior years!

Sport and children
Make sure that some family outings offer opportunities for physical activity, such as playing sport together.

The amount of physical activity you need
It’s important for your health that you get enough physical activity every day, and that you limit your sedentary behaviour. But getting the amount of physical activity you need doesn’t have to be...

Vision loss and sport
Many sports can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision.

Walking for good health
Walking will improve your fitness and reduce your risk of heart disease.

Walking - the benefits for older people
Walking is great exercise for older people. It has a range of health and social benefits, and most people can do it.

Health conditions and exercise

Arthritis and exercise
Exercise can reduce some of the symptoms of arthritis, and improve joint mobility and strength.

Asthma and exercise
Exercise-induced asthma can be prevented with medication and by preparing for exercise and physical activity.

Cancer - exercise to help you cope
People with cancer should be as physically active as their abilities and condition allow.

Dementia - reducing your risk
Adopting a ‘brain healthy’ lifestyle may reduce your risk of dementia in later life.

Diabetes - issues for children and teenagers
Many parents worry when their child with diabetes starts or returns to school.

Epilepsy and employment
Many people living with epilepsy are successfully employed across a range of professional fields.

Epilepsy and exercise
It is rare for a person with epilepsy to have a seizure during physical activity, but you should always take safety precautions when exercising.

Exercise and mood
Exercise can have an enormous impact on your mood. Not only can exercise help in treating depression, it can also prevent people from becoming depressed again.

So it’s important to keep up an exercise...

Exercise in your local surroundings (video)
Want to exercise, but find gyms boring or expensive? Sue Stanley and Shane Bilsborough team up to show you how to exercise indoors and outdoors using your local surroundings - whether it's running up...

HIV, hepatitis and sport
People with HIV or hepatitis B or C participate in a wide range of sports without restrictions, and the risk of transmission to another player is extremely small.

Menstruation - athletic amenorrhoea
Women who are athletes or who exercise a lot on a regular basis are at risk of developing athletic amenorrhoea, which is the absence of periods.

Osteoporosis and exercise
Exercise can reduce the risk of fractures resulting from osteoporosis by both slowing the rate of bone loss, and reducing the person’s risk of falling by building muscle strength and improving balance.

Sports injuries

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
A sports injury may be more severe than you think...

- Type 2 diabetes - healthy eating and exercise (video)

People with type 2 diabetes talk about positive lifestyle changes that improve their quality of life...

Related Information

- Older people in hospital - Get well soon
  Learn about improving and maintaining your health during a hospital stay...

- Keeping active
  Becoming physically active, safety, types of physical activity and exercise and health conditions...

- Physical activity - staying motivated
  Pick an exercise or fitness activity that appeals to you and suits your lifestyle...

- Physical activity – how to get started
  If you've been inactive and want to begin physical activity, see a doctor first...

- Gardening for children
  Children can learn new skills, have fun and develop self-confidence when they grow their own plants...

Home

Related information on other websites

- 10,000 Steps.
- Easy Exercise and Screening for You.
- Heart Foundation Walking.
- Life. Be in it.
- National physical activity guidelines.
- Physical Activity Australia - Active Living Programs.
- VicHealth - Walking school bus.
- Victoria Walks.

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The Department of Health and Human Services - Well for life - A healthy approach to ageing booklet (pdf)

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