

The Top 10 Do's and Don'ts for Walking

DO's

- Stretch and warm up appropriately.
- Start your walking program slowly and gradually increase distance, time, or pace. Walking too much, too fast, too soon will only lead to injury.
- Wear well-fitting walking shoes with a good arch.
- If you're over 60 or if you have health problems, check with your family doctor before beginning a walking program. This is also recommended for those who are 35-60, substantially overweight, easily fatigued, excessive smokers, or those who have been physically inactive for some time.
- Drink plenty of water before and after you walk.
- After every walk, stretch again to improve circulation and decrease buildup of lactic acid, the chemical by-product that causes muscles to ache.
- Wear thick, absorbent socks. Acrylic is preferable to cotton.
- Walk at a steady pace, brisk enough to make your heart beat faster.
- If you walk in the evening, wear clothing with reflective material for your safety.
- Get a walking buddy. This will not only make your walking more enjoyable, but you can also keep each other encouraged.

DON'Ts

- Ignore pain. Pain is not normal and is an indication that something is wrong.
- Walk at night. Walking at night is not only dangerous to your safety, but is also more likely to lead to injury.
- Walk for more than an hour at a time.
- Walk off or with an injury. Have foot and ankle injuries treated by your podiatrist or other injuries treated by your family doctor. By having injuries treated promptly, you will be able to return to your walking program more quickly.
- Walk on icy, wet, or unlevel sidewalks.
- Wear uncomfortable or inappropriate shoes. Improper shoes can lead to injury and painful conditions such as blisters and ingrown toenails.
- Smoke! Not only does smoking lead to many diseases, but it also affects your breathing and decreases the circulation to your legs.
- Walk more than five times per week. Walking everyday denies the body the rest time it needs to repair minor injuries that could lead to more serious ones.
- Walk outdoors during extreme weather periods. Instead walk in a gym, mall, or at home on a treadmill.
- Walk on busy streets or roads. When walking outside, it is safest to walk on sidewalks, walking paths, or in parks.

