

Walking is the New Running!

We've heard all our lives that physical activity is critical to good health – with federal guidelines recommending a minimum of 60 minutes per day for children and 150 minutes per week of moderate to vigorous activity for adults. And yet, less than 50 percent of our American youth, and only 24 percent of adults, meet these goals.¹

When you think of being active and getting fit, does running come to mind first? Many people picture long gym workouts and running marathons when they think of physically fit individuals. But that just isn't realistic for most people on an everyday basis. Going to the gym and running marathons is great if that is where you feel your best, but for many people finding something else that can help them stay active on a daily basis and for the long-term may involve something less demanding.

The benefits of walking have been around for many, many years. However, whenever we are looking to be more active or get more movement into our day, we often overlook this very simple activity.

Staying active and moving throughout the day helps lower our risk for many chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and some cancers. So if we are not incorporating exercise into our lifestyle, we are missing out on a very easy way to improve our health.²

Some have even claimed walking to be a “miracle drug”. Why would they make such a claim? Well, walking just 21 minutes a day could possibly cut your risk for heart disease by 30 percent according to the Harvard Health.³

Don't have time for a 20-30 minute walk? That's OK! One study found that for every minute of brisk walking that women achieved throughout the day, they lowered their risk of obesity by 5 percent.³ Every bit of movement is better than being sedentary, and we all can start with 1 minute walks between sitting at the desk or watching TV. The goal is to just move more!

We focus a lot on the physical benefits of walking, but what about the impact that physical activity has on reducing stress and even managing depression?

Walking has been found to help decrease depression, relieves stress, and helps create a space for more creative thinking and problem solving.³ In fact, one study showed that walking actually increases the supply of blood to the brain!⁴

I am lucky to have great coworkers who remind us all to go for a walk or two throughout the day for our breaks and I don't know how many times we have come up with a solution to an issue or a great new idea. It's a win, win when you get to be out in the fresh air walking and solving problems at the same time.

Walking also has a few other great aspects about it. It's free! I can't emphasize that enough right now. It's also enjoyable for most people, especially if you are able to go outside and enjoy the

fresh air and grab a partner to go with you, and it's maintainable for most people. Walking oftentimes is the easiest, most consistent form of physical activity that people are able to stick with.

At RRH our Wellness Committee recently outlined a safe walking path around the hospital to encourage staff to take a walk on their breaks. With the amazing health benefits of reducing chronic diseases, lowering stress levels, and improving mental clarity along with the great benefits of grabbing a coworker and connecting it's been a big hit with the employees.

If you have been feeling at a loss of what to do to improve your health and mood, maybe add walking to your weekly routine. Set an alarm during the day to remind yourself to get up and walk around, even if it's just in the house or office. Try to set aside 20-30 minutes each day or a few times a week that can be dedicated to taking a walk. Going on a walk alone can be a great time for some self-care and reflection or you can grab a coworker, friend, or family member to reap the benefits with you.

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1. [Microsoft Word - AW Health Benefits of Walking.docx \(aw2021.wpenginepowered.com\)](#)
2. [Walking | Physical Activity | CDC](#)
3. [Walking for Health - Harvard Health](#)
4. [How Walking Benefits the Brain - Neuroscience News](#)