

## **Walk for FUN, FITNESS and HEALTH**

Walking is one of the most popular physical activities in the US. Whatever your age, it's safe, inexpensive, enjoyable way to stay fit – improving your overall health and quality of life. Walk for health, weight loss, companionship, time alone, or just to get somewhere.

Walking is an excellent form of aerobic exercise; it improves your body's ability to use oxygen and helps strengthen your heart. Studies show that a stronger heart lessens the risk of heart disease, heart attacks, and high blood pressure.

Brisk walking is a terrific fat buster. The best way to lose weight is to decrease your food intake while increasing physical activity. For example, a brisk 45 minute walk 4 times a week for one year can result in an 18 pound weight loss – providing you don't eat more.

Walking can lessen daily anxiety, improve self-esteem and increase your sense of well-being. When you feel tense, depressed and unable to think clearly, take a mood uplifting walk. Many of history's great thinkers and creators were dedicated daily walkers.

Walking is an energy booster. Walking makes your heart stronger, decreases body fat, uplifts mood and relieves tension – all of which equals more energy for work and play. You'll feel the boost soon after you start your walk and find that it lasts longer than a candy bar.

Walking is a safe and enjoyable activity for almost everyone. However, it is important to consult your doctor before you start a walking program if you are inactive or over the age of 45. At any age, see your doctor if you have a history of heart disease or orthopedic problems.

Walking doesn't generally require any special foods. Some people walk after dinner, while others feel more comfortable waiting 1-2 hours after eating to walk. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Especially if the weather is warm. Carrying water with you is a good idea.

Be comfortable and dress according to the weather. During cold weather, wear layers of clothing that keep out the cold. Keep your head, neck, face, ears and hands warm. When it's warm, wear cotton that allows perspiration to evaporate. Wear a reflective vest in the early morning or at night.

A good pair of comfortable shoes is important. Don't judge a shoe by price alone. Your shoes should be well-fitted, provide stable heel, ankle, and arch support and good traction. Choose flexible shoes that cushion the foot. Avoid sneakers designed for basketball and racquet sports.