

## Tips on Maintaining a Walking Program during the Summer Season

Summer is an ideal time to take advantage of outdoor activities and enjoy the pleasant weather. Establishing a walking program can help you maintain your weight, keep your heart healthy and increase your quality of life. According to an American Heart Association (AHA) journal, “regular physical activity, including aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening activity, is essential for healthy aging.” The AHA said walking increases physical fitness, reducing the risk of chronic disease, premature mortality, functional limitations and disability.

It is important to recognize your current aerobic fitness level before you begin a program. Physical therapists are able to evaluate your fitness level, and recommend proper stretches and workout intensity levels prior to beginning the program.

Below, Physiotherapy Associates, along with the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, provide some tips on how to prepare for and maintain your walking routine:

- Choose a safe place to walk. If you are not walking with a partner, make sure a friend or loved one knows your walking route and the time of day you walk.
- Invest in functional, comfortable walking shoes. Choose shoes with proper arch support, a firm heel, and thick flexible soles.
- Wear clothes that will keep you dry and comfortable. Synthetic fabrics absorb sweat and remove it from your skin. To stay cool as the days get hotter, wear a baseball cap or visor.
- Stretch before you begin. Your physical therapist can recommend stretches that are customized to your needs.
- Warm up by walking slowly for 5 minutes.
- Increase your speed to a fast walk, and maintain that speed for a minimum of 20 minutes. If you haven't exercised regularly, gradually work up to a 20-minute walk.
- Cool down by walking slowly again for 5 minutes.
- Do light stretching again after cool-down.
- Try to walk three to five times per week for a minimum of 20 minutes.
- Keep track of your progress with a walking journal or log. It is easy to set and meet goals, motivating you to improve your fitness.

Walking is one piece to your fitness puzzle. Aerobic activity reduces the risk of cardiovascular issues, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, colon cancer, breast cancer, anxiety and depression, the AHA said. Stronger muscles and increased agility also reduce your risk for falls, an elevated concern among aging adults.

It is recommended that a fitness plan is established after a medical professional's consultation. A physical therapist can help you recognize your physical limitations, set fitness goals and help you sustain your program in a healthy fashion.

For information on how physical therapy can help with your walking routine, please visit us online at [www.physiocorp.com](http://www.physiocorp.com)

**Physiotherapy  
Associates**