

WALKING:

IS IT STILL THE BEST FORM OF EXERCISE?

Top 5 Reasons Why Walking Should be Part of Every Fitness Routine

By Elizabeth R. Kovar M.A.



It's no secret that every-body walks. From the beginning of life to the end of time, humans walk in order to produce and complete tasks. The fitness industry has evolved over the last several decades to show that high intensity exercise is one of the most effective methods to reach fitness goals. However, for the average American pushing their bodies to the limit is not sustainable long-term. Much research is now showing that those who move throughout the day (rather than sitting and executing one hard workout) achieve and maintain weightloss goals.

Walking is not only a sustainable method of exercise, but is achievable at any age (excluding any disability). To better understand why walking should be parts of every-body's fitness routine continue reading below.

WALKING IS SUSTAINABLE AND SOCIAL-ABLE

Do you have clients or students who are just beginning exercise after 50 years of age? Do you have clients who dislike traditional exercise? Or working out in a gym?

If so, walking maybe the best method of exercise to integrate social butterflies with low-impact exercise. With appropriate footwear, walking is one of the easiest forms of movement, and cardiovascular exercise, that people experience. It does not "wear-and-tear" the joints like higher impact exercises such as running, kickboxing and HIIT training.

In addition, walking allows people to escape stress while enjoying the outdoors and company with loved ones. Walking routines can help train for bigger pursuits such as hiking and backpacking.

EVERYONE IN THE WORLD IS WALKING

It's true, everyone in the world in walking. America's urban development is greatly dependent upon cars and driving long distances. On the other hand, most of the world is developed to use space efficiently. Therefore, people live in dense communities where walking and biking are the essential modes of transportation. Although American daily lives are not dependent upon walking, there are plenty of ways to integrate walking into lives. Walking meetings at work, lunch break walks or meet-up walking groups stimulate the body to burn extra calories throughout the day. As a result, people do not have to escape civilization to enjoy (the benefits) of walking. Plus, research continuously shows how beneficial walking is to the human body.

RESEARCH APPROVES WALKING

Research has studied walking for the last several decades. Time and time again walking is proven to benefit human lives.

The following examples are results from past research studies about walking.

- Walking elevates mood.
- Walking reduces risk of disease (such as dementia, stroke, Diabetes, heart disease) as a result of increased blood flow to the brain and elevation in "happy" hormones.
- Walking can reduce the use of medications.
- Walking increases bone density.
- Walking can reduce chronic pain as a result of moving the body.

IT'S EASY TO MIX-UP

Walking is a low-impact cardiovascular exercise that mainly uses fat as a fuel source. Although walking is low intensity (and expends less calories than HIIT training) walking has "high" capabilities to reduce boredom. Walking is translatable to any indoor and outdoor environment, which is a seasonal exercise.

The following examples are easy ways to mix-up walking.

- Choose different park or outdoor paths.
- Hit the hills to produce incline challenges.
- Increase elevation or speed on treadmills.
- Add in stairs in buildings or at outdoor stadiums.
- Hike state and national parks.
- Increase the intensity with pool walking/jogging.

BEATS STRESS

Thanks to positive hormonal release (and serene nature sites) walking maintains and prevents stress. The movement increases respiration; thus, producing more oxygen flows throughout the body. For some, walking is an escape to reduce thoughts about a worrying situation.

A popular term coined, "mindful walking," is an act of walking while staying in the present moment. This allows a person to focus on their breathing while channeling energy and thoughts as it comes. The goal is to notice the sights, sounds, surroundings and sensations while returning the focus to the breath. The concept follows the same yoga and meditation principles of being in the moment. Those who stay in the moment often find greater happiness in many areas of life as their time is productive on happiness rather than worrying.

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