

Counting Steps Toward Better Health Using a Pedometer



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Enjoy being active every day

Enjoy being active every day with your pedometer.

Being active every day is important for a healthy body and mind. A pedometer is a great incentive to help you make physical activity part of your day.

This simple tool measures the number of steps taken and distance travelled. Some models can even calculate the calories/kilojoules burned.

By measuring your walking activity you can see how much more you may need to do to gain a health benefit.

Physical inactivity increases the risk of all major chronic diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, mental illness, diabetes) and most of their risk factors (obesity and hypertension).

The good news is, being active is great fun and it's never too late to start. Improvements in health are immediate and can make a lasting difference.

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The benefits of walking

For You

Brisk walking is a great activity for people of all ages. Regular walking helps you to:

- Feel good and be more energetic
- Manage your weight
- Achieve healthier blood cholesterol and blood pressure
- Build stronger bones and muscles
- Reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity and other health problems
- Relax, boost your confidence and mood
- Feel a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

You can do your bit for the environment and save money by replacing just a few short car trips with walking each week.

For the Community

There are many benefits to be gained for the community when its members are more active. Air pollution and traffic congestion are reduced when people replace car trips with walking. For most households, using the car is the greatest contributor to climate change. Walking can also contribute to people having a better sense of community and help increase personal safety as there are more people 'out and about'. Walking can also reduce health care costs as people with healthier lifestyles place less pressure on the health system.

Wearing your pedometer

Set up according to the instructions supplied with your pedometer.

Put your pedometer on in the morning as soon as you wake up. Clip it to the waist of your pants or belt just above your hip. Only remove it if you're going to swim, bathe or shower. Take it off just before you go to bed.



How often, how much and for how long?

The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most days of the week.

Brisk walking is walking at an energetic pace that still allows you to talk without any huffing and puffing.

The good news is that the 30 minutes doesn't have to be done all at once. It can be done in blocks of ten minutes or more, if this suits your routine better.

When you are using a pedometer to count steps, aim for 10,000 steps each day. You can build up to this gradually.

30 minutes of walking only equals about 3,000 steps, so it is very important to be active and walk at other times of the day.

If in your usual day you already walk 10,000 steps – congratulations, you have reached the level of physical activity regarded as good for your health. To further improve your cardiovascular fitness or to lose weight, try increasing gradually to 15,000 steps a day.

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How am I doing?

Setting goals

There are two ways you can measure your achievements – by distance or by the number of steps taken.

You can set your own realistic goals and the easiest way to do this is to wear your pedometer for a day and measure the number of steps and/or distance. You can then set a daily target to work towards during the next few weeks.

For example:

If in your usual day you walk 2,000 steps, aim to reach 3,000 steps a day by the end of the next week, and work towards 10,000 steps by week nine or ten.

If in your usual day you walk 5,000 steps, aim to reach 6,000 steps by the end of the next week, 7,000 the week after and increase to 10,000 steps by week five.

If you are measuring distance, you might want to increase your usual distance each day so that you increase by one kilometre each week.

Try measuring the steps or distance on your favourite beach walk, dog walk or around the local park, to help you find out what is achievable.

Any increase in your physical activity will improve your health.

Be active walking plan

- Make copies of this chart and put in on your fridge or desk.
- Write your weekly walking goal in the first row for each week.
- Aim for a brisk pace and 3000 or 5000 steps a day, 30 to 60 minutes a day or 3-5km a day.

Week 1

Day	Steps	Distance	Time
GOAL			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
TOTAL			

Week 2

Day	Steps	Distance	Time
GOAL			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
TOTAL			

Week 3

Day	Steps	Distance	Time
GOAL			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
TOTAL			

Week 4

Day	Steps	Distance	Time
GOAL			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
TOTAL			

Aim for a brisk pace and 3000 to 5000 steps a day, 30 to 60 minutes a day or 3 to 5kms a day.

Ideas to help you walk more

Walking is the easiest form of physical activity to incorporate into your day. Here are a few simple ideas to help you get more steps into each day:

- Get off the train or bus a stop earlier and walk
- Walk to the corner shops, between shops or between sites at work
- Take a walk at lunchtime
- Take the dog for a walk – and the family!
- Walk to your favourite local café or restaurant
- Walk with your children to school
- Walk to visit family or friends
- Enjoy a family bushwalk or get to know your neighbourhood
- Organise to walk regularly with friends or family to catch up
- Contact your Local Government to find out about walking groups in your area
- Walk instead of taking motorised transport on the farm



Safety tips for moderate physical activity

If you have a chronic health condition (e.g. heart disease, diabetes, asthma) it is advisable to consult your doctor before you start any regular physical activity.

Here are some walking tips to get you on your way:

- Choose comfortable clothes to suit the weather. Choose shoes with soft or shock absorbing soles. To prevent sun damage use sun-screen, a hat and wear sunglasses.
- Start slowly and at a low level. Build up your pace over a few weeks. Don't overdo it.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after any physical activity, including walking. It's a good idea to get into the habit of taking a small bottle of drinking water with you.
- Avoid intense physical activity straight after meals or alcohol or if you have an illness, such as a cold.
- If you feel discomfort, unusual chest pain, breathless or have a rapid or irregular heart beat during walking stop immediately and seek medical advice.
- Remember to maximise your health, be active every day, don't smoke and enjoy healthy eating.

Average steps for Western Australians

Research by the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce shows that walking for recreation is the most popular activity for men (56%) and women (70%)¹.

In a pedometer study undertaken by the Taskforce in November 2001, it was found that the average number of steps taken each day was as follows:

Perth (9627 steps)

Males

18–29 years old (9939 steps)

30–44 (11284 steps)

45–59 (10163 steps)

60+ (8601 steps)

Non-Perth (9899 steps)

Females

18–29 (9854 steps)

30–44 (9853 steps)

45–59 (9253 steps)

60+ (7757 steps)



About the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce

Increasing physical activity levels, among both children and adults, is a State Government priority supported by the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce.

The Taskforce was established in 2001 to oversee the development and delivery of a whole-of-government, whole-of-community physical activity strategy for Western Australia.

The Taskforce has brought together the expertise of the Departments of the Premier and Cabinet; Health; Education and Training; Sport and Recreation; Planning and Infrastructure; the Office for Children and Youth; the WA Local Government Association; Healthway; Lotterywest and leading academics and community representatives.

Recognising that no single agency or organisation will be able to increase physical activity on its own, the Taskforce works collectively with its partners aligning under the 'be active wa' brand.

Acknowledgements

Some content has been drawn from the National Heart Foundation's publication 'Make Every Step Count'.

¹ Milligan, R., McCormack, G.R., Rosenberg, M. (2007). Physical Activity Levels of Western Australian Adults 2006: Results from the Adult Physical Activity Study. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government.

Further information

Contact your Local Government for information on walking groups, activities and publications on walking trails and places to walk.

www.beactive.wa.gov.au

www.dpi.wa.gov.au/walking

www.dpi.wa.gov.au/travelsmart

www.heartfoundation.com.au

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