

Can I Walk to Get “There”?

If “there” is a place where you want to feel energized, invigorated, healthier, perhaps lose weight, boost your mood, keep your joints and bones strong, then, yes, you can get “there” by walking. An age-old debate as to whether running is better than walking does exist. But, while there are some distinct differences between the two, what is better is what works best for the individual engaging in the activity. The reality is the best exercise is one that you’ll actually do!

For someone who is just beginning their journey to a healthier lifestyle, walking is a good way to ease into a regular cardio activity. For many walking will be the suggested activity over running due to joint or back issues or for those beginning a significant weight loss journey. Both running and walking result in impact to the body. When running, your body is absorbing the impact of up to 3 times your body weight. Walking typically results in an impact of 1-1.2 times your body weight. Walking is therefore a lower impact approach and can usually be done for longer periods of time. Walking can be done practically anywhere; around your neighborhood, near where you work, in a nearby park or on a treadmill at home or at a gym. With a modest investment in a good pair of shoes and socks you can begin walking immediately.

There is significant scientific research that has proven the many benefits of walking. It improves fitness, promotes cardiac health, alleviates depression and fatigue, creates less stress on joints and reduces pain, can prevent weight gain and promote weight loss, reduces the risk of dementia, reduces the risk of cancer and chronic diseases, can result in healthier cholesterol levels and boosts your brain power. And the list goes on!

The general guideline is to engage in 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. If you’re new to walking you can begin by walking short distances then gradually increase your distance and duration to meet the guideline. Walking at a pace of 2 miles per hour has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes by 30-40% and the risk of breast cancer by 20-30%, when done on a regular basis. You might consider walking with a group to make walking even more enjoyable and help you stick to your plan. If you’re experienced in walking and are looking for ways to take your activity up a notch you can increase your pace, introduce interval walking, seek out hills or steps, add a weighted vest or include upper body movement by swinging your arms.

The Healthy Adams County Physical Fitness Task force offers free walking events on Wednesdays through October 12th. Weather permitting hikes are sponsored throughout the late fall and winter season. The schedule of events can be found at healthyadamscounty.org and on their Facebook page, Healthy Adams County. Join us at one of these events and begin your walking and fitness journey.

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