



The Wellness Watch

promoting healthy lifestyles

April 2015

April 1st: National Start Walking Day

If you missed the starting date, that's OK. It's never too late to join in and get going!

Why Walk? It's a gentle, low-impact form of exercise that's easy, free and suitable for people of all ages and most abilities. Walking is as simple as it gets for exercise. All you need is a good, supportive pair of walking shoes.

Benefits of Walking

- ▶ **Strengthens your heart:** Reduces your risk of heart disease and stroke; improves both LDL (bad) and HDL (good) cholesterol levels; and keeps blood pressure in check.
- ▶ **Lowers disease risk:** Helps prevent and manage other health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, asthma and some cancers (ie. colon, breast, uterine).
- ▶ **Keeps weight in check:** One of the easiest ways to burn extra calories, increase muscle mass and tone. The more muscle, the faster your metabolism – so you burn more calories, even at rest.
- ▶ **Can help prevent dementia:** Reduces dementia risk by up to 40%.
- ▶ **Strengthen your bones:** A weight-bearing activity, it strengthens bones, helping to prevent osteoporosis. Maintains healthy joints so may prevent or slow arthritis.
- ▶ **Tones your legs – and more:** Strengthens and shapes your legs – especially if you add hills, tones your abs and trims your waist. Swinging your arms tones your arms, shoulders and upper back.
- ▶ **Improves your balance and coordination.**
- ▶ **Gives you energy:** Boosts circulation, making you feel more alert and alive. Loosens up stiff joints and eases muscle tension so you feel less sluggish.
- ▶ **Improves your mood:** Releases feel-good endorphins, reducing stress and anxiety. Regular exercise can be as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression.

Use Good Walking Technique

Turning your normal walk into a fitness stride requires good posture and purposeful movements. Ideally, here's how you'll look when you're walking:

- Your head is up. You're looking forward, not at the ground.
- Your neck, shoulders and back are relaxed, not stiffly upright.
- You're swinging your arms freely with a slight bend in your elbows. A little pumping with your arms is OK.
- Your stomach muscles are slightly tightened and your back is straight, not arched forward or backward.
- You're walking smoothly, rolling your foot from heel to toe.



A Cause for Memory Problems

High blood sugar may accelerate age-related brain decline, according to a recent study. Researchers found that those with poorly controlled blood sugar in middle age had a 19% larger decline in memory and the ability to tackle mental chores 20 years later. People with the highest blood sugar levels showed memory problems similar to people five years older.

Tech Corner

Instant Heart Rate monitor

- ◆ The most accurate Heart Rate Monitor app for any smart phone — Android or iOS
- ◆ Does not need any external hardware
- ◆ Tracks your progress
- ◆ By placing the tip of your index finger on phone's camera your Heart Rate will be shown in a couple of seconds
- ◆ A real-time chart will show your every heart beat
- ◆ Rated 4.3



Think Outside the Box (or Bag)

Remember that many of the best cancer-fighting foods don't have labels on them. Fresh tomatoes, carrots, apples, squash, blueberries, leafy greens – or any fruit or vegetable in the produce section – are the foods to load up on because they are naturally low in calories without any added sugar or fat.



Head off Headaches

Nearly everyone gets headaches. Yet no one knows how to prevent them. A new study that reviewed the data from the 2001 DASH-sodium trial suggests that cutting back on salt may help.

- The study assigned people with high blood pressure or pre-hypertension to diets that were:
 - High-sodium (3,300 milligrams a day)
 - Medium sodium (2,400 mg a day) or
 - Low-sodium (1,500 mg a day)
- Each participant was on each of the diets for 30 days.
- Each sodium level came in either a typical American diet or a DASH diet that was rich in fruits and vegetables and included low-fat dairy daily, fish, poultry, nuts, beans, oils, and very little sugar.



The participants were 30% less likely to report a headache while eating the low-sodium diet than while eating the high-sodium diet. (It didn't matter whether the diet was the typical American or DASH version.)

What to do: Cut back on salt. This study does not prove that less salt means fewer headaches. And the results may apply only to people with hypertension or pre hypertension. Nevertheless, eating less salt can lower blood pressure. That's a plus!

Calf Stretches

After walking is a great time to stretch. Your muscles are warm so you will get the most improvement in flexibility. **Remember, stretches should not hurt.** Hold each stretch for 30 seconds, repeating twice for each muscle on each leg. Be sure you do not hold your breath. Here are a few simple examples of stretches for your legs:

Calf Stretches: There are two muscles to be stretched for your calf.



For the first stretch:

- Begin with your back leg straight
- Push the heel on that leg towards the floor until a stretch is felt in the calf

For the second stretch:

- Bring the back foot forward, closer to the front foot
- While bending the knees into a slight squat, sit back onto the back leg until a stretch is felt lower near your heel



For both stretches: Make sure the foot on the leg being stretched is facing straight ahead.