

Health Promotion in Motion

How to Begin a Walking Program

Walking is one of the easiest ways to be physically active. You can do it almost anywhere and at any time. Walking is also inexpensive. All you need is a pair of comfortable shoes.

Why Begin a Walking Program?

- Walking is easy and convenient.
- Walking helps you maintain a healthy weight.
- Walking can make hearts, bones and friendships stronger.
- Walking increases your energy level.
- Walking regularly can lower your risk of chronic diseases, like heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- When you walk with friends and family, you can be physically active while you socialize.



Getting Started

- Gather your friends, coworkers or family members.
- If you already take work breaks with a small group, why not walk during the work break?
- Try coordinating a walking group via:
 - Bulletin boards
 - Worksite email or newsletter
 - Flyers or posters
 - Word of mouth
- Begin by talking informally about how often to walk and where you will meet.
- Your walking partner(s) should be able to walk with you on the same schedule and the same speed.
- Keep walks about the same length each time. Check a map if you are unsure of which route the group should take.
- Start slowly by walking just 10 minutes each day. Soon you will work your way up to 20 minutes, then 30 minutes. Before you know it, walking will become a habit.
- If the group gets too large, it can always split into smaller groups.
- Keep it fun! Having fun makes the time go by much faster and makes the walk more enjoyable.



Stories from the Road

Here's what some employees are saying about walking groups.

- I can walk farther when I walk with a group.
- I walk more each week when I walk with a group.
- I really enjoy talking with my group and walking at the same time.
- Time goes by much faster when you have someone to chat with while you walk.
- It doesn't seem like exercise when you walk with friends.



How Employers Can Help

- Provide outdoor exercise areas such as sidewalks and trails.
- Support walking breaks during the workday.
- Offer flexible work hours to allow employees to walk during the day.
- Make and share maps of on-site trails and nearby walking routes and destinations.
- Provide shower and changing facilities.
- Host walk-and-talk meetings.
- Allow after-work and evening access to recreation facilities.
- Encourage walking groups to set physical activity goals and to provide incentives for meeting those goals.



A Walking Group for Kids – the “Walking School Bus”

A walking school bus is a group of children walking to school with one or more adult. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a planned route with meeting points, a timetable and trained volunteers. Before starting a Walking School Bus, check with your child's school to see if there is one organized in your area.

While walking with the Walking School Bus, children can:

- Have fun
- Learn pedestrian safety
- Participate in physical activity to start their day
- Socialize and get to know other children
- Arrive at school alert and ready to learn

Parents can:

- Save money by not using gas to drive to and from school
- Get to know other parents and neighborhood children
- Get a morning walk for themselves

To learn more, visit [Safe Routes to School](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus):

http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/walking_school_bus.