



Physiotherapists:
The Body Specialists

Physio Tips

WALKING

Physiotherapy Association of BC

START WALKING!

30 Minutes of walking each day has health benefits. Walking is the simplest and easiest form of exercise.

To avoid injury, Physiotherapists recommend the following:

- **A warm up and cool down** is vital to every walking program. Keep muscles flexible and relaxed, joints mobile, and relieve tension and strain by doing a few gentle stretches before and after your walk. Important areas to stretch are the neck, shoulders, arms, low back and spine, hip flexors, buttocks, quads, hamstrings, shins, calves and ankles. Stretch and hold until you feel tension but not pain. Do not bounce as this can tear the muscle fibres.
- **While walking focus on:**
 - Your posture: keep your shoulders square and relaxed; make sure your head, shoulders and hips are lined up over your feet;
 - Achieving an efficient stride; not too long (an “overstride” will tighten and tire your muscles) and not too short;
 - Maintaining a consistent, comfortable pace;
 - Maintaining a tall erect posture, keeping your torso upright;
 - Keeping your breathing relaxed;
 - Your arm swing, driving your arms backwards, not just forwards;
 - Relaxing and keeping shoulders loose;
 - Your foot strike; pay attention to actively pushing off, rolling from the heel right through and off the end of the toe;
 - Pointing your feet straight ahead.
 - Not over exerting yourself

Starting a walking program:

- During the first week, walk 10-15 minutes at a slow pace, on a flat surface – avoiding hills and stairs.
- After week one, maintain the same distance but pick up the pace.
- Over the following several weeks, build up gradually to a 20 - 30-minute walk, three to four times per week, at a pace that is brisk but comfortable.

What to Wear:

- Your base layer should be a moisture-wicking fabric (avoid cotton);
- The middle layer should be a little heavier that fits loosely over the base layer.
- The outer layer should be a lightweight, breathable, windproof jacket that will protect you against cold, wind, rain or snow while still allowing perspiration to evaporate.
- Well-fitting shoes: Your physiotherapist can suggest a walking shoe that best suits your needs and walking program;

Also rotate your walking routes from incline to flat, sidewalk to grass, to keep it interesting and Listen to your body and watch for recurring or persisting pain – if concerned, seek early professional attention from your physiotherapist.

Physiotherapists are experts in movement and mobility, body mechanics, muscles and joints. They will help develop an exercise program specially-tailored to your needs, putting together the right combination of activities to improve physical fitness and avoid injury.



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