

Pedometers are Key to Fitness Motivation and Weight Loss

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2004 Personal Trainer of the Year – Online Training

Pedometers are your best kept secret to making exercising easier, improving your health and having fun in the process. They help to streamline your walking routine and move you closer to your physical goals, one step at a time.

Walking is one of the simplest, most cost-effective, and enjoyable forms of activity. Clipping on a pedometer helps to take out all of the guess work and lets you see your accomplishments before your eyes. How long will it be before you begin to see results? The answer: almost immediately! You will first notice a difference in your energy followed by improvements in your fitness level, performance, fat loss and muscular endurance.

A pedometer gives you specific feedback on your progress and inspires you to go a little longer or make better time in the same distance. Glancing down at your pedometer is assurance that you are doing your body a world of good.

When clipped onto your belt, the pedometer (which is smaller than a pager) can be just the inspiration you need to get you moving from sedentary to fabulously fit. Put it on when you get out of bed in the morning to see how many steps you take all day. Gradually build your way up to a goal of 10,000 steps a day which is predicted to be the amount necessary for heart health.

Do periodic step checks throughout the day to make sure you are achieving your goal. This way you will not be left with a majority of the steps to do at night. You can set goals to increase your steps by 5 percent increments every day until you reach 10,000. Don't worry if it takes you a month or a year or more. Start slowly and incorporate some of the following tips for using a pedometer to build up to 10,000 steps a day:

- Any time you are waiting, get moving. For example, take a walk while waiting to pick the kids up from practice, waiting for your car to be serviced or waiting for a plane.
- Do all of your Saturday errands on foot. For example, park your car on one side of town and walk to the bank, post office, card store, video store and so on.
- Make it a family affair. Share quality time taking an evening walk rather than sitting at the table eating seconds or lying on the couch. Push the baby in a stroller or walk alongside the kids on their bikes.
- Keep a journal. Note your total miles each day. Record how you felt after exercising as well as your goals for the next day. Some sophisticated pedometers can download all of your data.
- Have rewards ready. For example, when you reach 5,000 steps, buy a new CD to listen to while you walk. When you reach 7,500 steps, treat yourself to a massage.
- Park your car at the end of the lot or in the next lot over.
- Get off the train a stop early.
- Take the scenic route by foot to your office or when traveling about during the work day.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- On long drives, stop every hour and walk around for 15 minutes.
- Meet friends for a walk rather than lunch.
- Make walking fun by dancing to your favorite music.
- Use the push mower instead of the riding mower.
- Join a walking club.
- Sign up for a walk-a-thon and begin training today.
- Volunteer to train a guide dog for the blind or handicapped.

There are enjoyable places to walk everywhere you look including golf courses, parks, rail trails, city streets, beaches, college campuses and so on. All you need to get started are some supportive sneakers, loose fitting clothing, a bottle of water and your pedometer.

Not convinced yet? Those who walk 30 minutes a day have a significantly lower risk of premature death than those

who rarely exercised. A study of 13,500 men who climbed up and down about 100 steps a day reduced their risk of death by nearly 20 percent. This reduction is equivalent to walking about two miles a day and is equal to the calorie burn of a 30-minute brisk walk.

Decreased risk of disease! Walking just three hours a week at a moderate pace can cut your risk of heart attack and stroke by almost a third. Go for brisk walks and you'll reduce those risks by half.

Improved health! A regular walking program can help reduce blood cholesterol, lower blood pressure, increase cardiovascular endurance, boost bone strength, burn calories and keep weight down.

Trimmed waistline! Walking four or more hours a week reduces a woman's risk of gaining weight around her waist by 16 percent. To determine this, researchers have tracked more than 44,000 women for 10 years, according to the International Journal of Obesity.

Improved eyesight! When a group of sedentary folks started a regular 40-minute walking program that was conducted 3 times a week at a brisk pace, those with glaucoma reduced their eye pressure by 20 percent, says the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Burned calories! A 180-pound person walking burns 9.7 calories per minute. Step up the pace to a 10-minute mile jog, and you will be shedding 13.9 calories a minute. Kick it up another notch and run an eight-minute mile to burn a cool 17 calories per minute.

Halted osteoporosis! The Journal of Bone and Mineral Research reported that women over the age of 50 who currently walk outdoors for more than 30 minutes a day are 20 percent less likely to develop a "dowager's hump" as a result of osteoporosis.

Enjoyable lifestyle! In a study of 55 healthy men over a 20-week period, walking during a golf game proved to be a practical and safe form of physical activity with a high degree of adherence. The average walking distance for 18 holes was approximately five miles and burned approximately 420 calories without carrying clubs. Playing 2 1/2 rounds of golf per week significantly improved their aerobic performance and favorably affected the golfers' body composition. Even though golf is a low level activity, it can stimulate metabolic fitness due to its long duration.

After you have been at your goal of 10,000 steps a day for eight straight weeks, begin increasing your steps by five percent. Oh, and you can click here to get your pedometer. 10,000 steps a day keeps the doctor away.

Kelli Calabrese, MS, CSCS - [2004 Personal Trainer of the Year for Online Trainer](#). She is a 17 year fitness industry leader, author, trainer, and international presenter. Kelli is on the Board of Directors for the American Association of Personal Trainers, An Expert Fellow for the National Board of Fitness Examiners, the Lead Exercise Physiologist for NESTA (National Endurance Sports Trainers Association) and has attained over 20 fitness and nutrition certifications. Kelli is the co-author of [Feminine, Firm and Fit](#) and is available for fitness consulting. She can be reached at Kelli@KelliCalabrese.com. For more details go to www.KelliCalabrese.com.