In this packet, you’ll find lots of info on how to create a walking program in your community.
Take an extra step to better health and start walking today!

BROUGHT TO YOU BY ADVOCATES FOR HEALTH IN ACTION

Advocatesforhealthinaction.org
Start A Community Walking Program

Be an advocate of health in your community by starting a walking program. Here are a few tips to help you get a program started today.

Engage
Engage in your community by asking work colleagues, neighbors, friends, volunteer or church groups or parents from your child’s school to join you.

Plan
> Be prepared. Make sure you have a proposed time and place to start.
> Keep track of participation by asking walkers to provide contact info, preferred walking times and locations.

Promote
> Take advantage of social networking sites like Facebook (www.facebook.com) or Meet Up (www.meetup.com) to connect with others who are interested in walking.

Research
Research online resources for more tools and tips on how to start your own club. Visit Advocates for Health in Action’s website for a list of walking trails or recreational spots in your community. Google Maps Pedometer is a great start too!

Have Fun
Walking games and scavenger hunts are a great way to engage and get to know the members of your group. Make the scavenger hunt even more fun by taking a trip to the zoo, aquarium, museum or other fun destinations. Don’t limit yourself to these ideas. Think outside of the box!
> Eye spy game
> Create walking songs
> Scavenger hunt categories:
> Plants, animals, nature or gardens
> Holiday themes or decorations
> Vehicles
> Architecture or types of houses
> People watching
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Start A School Walking Program

Starting a school walking program is a great way to add extra exercise to your daily routine. Here are a few tips to get one started at your child’s school.

Engage
Ask parents, neighbors and friends that go to your child’s school to join you on an organized walk. Asking PTA or volunteer groups you are a part of is a great start, too.

Plan
Brainstorm fun ideas with your group about how to increase walking at your child’s school. Try these ideas:
> Don’t take the bus. Instead, organize a walking school bus with kids and parents in your area.
> Play follow the leader. Ask your school administration to lead a walk.
> Start a before or after school walking club. Try walking on the playgroup while kids play.
> Use pedometers as motivators.
> Create a simple map of where it’s safe to walk.
> Challenge your group to walk across our state or the US! Just calculate how many steps it takes to get there and track your progress.

Promote
Walking to school makes sense, and it helps to remind others of its benefits:
> It’s FREE
> No special equipment or space is needed.
> It’s safe.
> Anyone can feel the success of walking no matter the fitness level.

Get Motivated
Increase participation by encouraging friendly competition. Offer prizes or incentives to those who track the most steps. Suggest a class vs. class or school vs. school challenge, and find a community sponsor to recognize the winners.

Have Fun
Walking games and scavenger hunts are a great way to engage and get to know the members of your group. Make the scavenger hunt even more fun by taking a trip to the zoo, aquarium, museum or other fun destination. Don’t limit yourself to these ideas. Think outside of the box!
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Why Should I Stretch?
Research has shown that people who add flexibility exercises into their workout routines, gain an average of 20% more strength than those who do not stretch. Flexibility is the ability to move a joint throughout its range of motion. Maintaining flexibility is necessary for optimal performance of your body. A body that is flexible is less prone to injury and to low back pain. Studies have shown that stretching may also improve circulation to joints and may actually help decelerate joint degenerative processes. Stretching at the end of your workout may be the most efficient way to produce permanent gains in flexibility since the muscles and ligament temperatures are slightly elevated.

Warm-up and cool down stretches
Begin your workout by warming up your body. Warming up prepares the body for physical activity – it prevents a rapid increase in blood pressure, improves blood flow to the heart, increases muscle temperature and makes muscles more flexible. It takes about 5 to 10 minutes of light exercise to warm-up the body, although this time tends to increase with age. On cooler days, it may take longer to warm-up. Breaking a sweat is a good indicator of being warmed up. Once your muscles are warm you can begin to stretch. Stretching before and after exercising allows your muscles to lengthen and reduces the risk of injury and muscle soreness. Stretch gently and hold each stretch for 10 or more seconds. Avoid bouncing while you stretch and remember to breathe in through your nose and out your mouth. The following are examples of warm up and cool down stretches:

Calf Stretch
Step out with your left foot. Bend your left knee slightly and place your palms on your upper left thigh for support. Do not allow your left knee to bend over your left toes (knee should be in alignment with your heel). Keeping your back straight, lean slightly forward. You should feel a gentle stretch in the calf of the leg that’s extended behind you. Repeat on the other side. Hold each stretch for 10 or more seconds. Remember to breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

Quadricep Stretch
Stand up straight. You may choose to hold onto a chair or wall for additional support. Place feet hip distance apart and point toes forward. Keep shoulders even and hold abdominal muscles in tightly for additional support. Bend left leg at knee and grasp left foot with left hand. Align knees together (do not lift knee forward, backwards or sideways). Feel the stretch in the left quadriceps. Hold stretch for 10 or more seconds. Repeat on right leg. Remember to breathe through your stretch. Inhale through nose and exhale through mouth.

Arms & Shoulder Stretch
Stand tall, feet slightly wider than shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent. Place your right arm, parallel with the ground across the front of your chest. Bend the left arm up and use the left forearm to ease the right arm closer to you chest. Hold stretch for 10 or more seconds. You will feel the stretch in the shoulder. Repeat with the other arm.

Neck Stretch
Keep your head up, directly over your shoulders. Gradually, move your ear to your left shoulder. Avoid all and any circular motions. Stop and hold when mild tension is felt. After 10 or more seconds, relax and repeat steps on your right side.

Hamstring Stretch
Sit on a chair and placing your left leg forward with knee slightly bent. Bend forward at waist (keeping back straight) and reach towards your left toes. Keep right leg bent (knee aligned with heel) for support. Hold stretch for 10 or more seconds. Repeat on right leg. Remember to breathe through your stretch. Inhale through nose and exhale through mouth.

Recommendations
The American Heart Association recommends that you consult a health professional before beginning an exercise program if you have:

> Heart trouble or have had a heart attack;
> Frequent pains in the left chest, mid-chest area, left neck, shoulder or arm during or immediately after exercise, after meals, or when out in the cold;
> Uncontrolled high blood pressure;
> Bone or joint problems that can be made worse by the proposed physical activity;
> An immediate family member who has died before age 50; or, a medical condition not mentioned here that might require special attention;
> Persons over age 60 and not accustomed to vigorous exercise;
> Persons taking any prescription medicines.
Games and scavenger hunts are fun to play while on a walk. Here is an example of one your group can play. Don’t stop here! Get creative with other fun ideas that will engage everyone in your group.

**People Peepers**

*Can you find these people? Be the first to check off each kind of person on this list, and win the game. Good luck!*

- Woman carrying a purse
- Baby in a stroller
- Bald man
- Person with a briefcase
- Man with long brown hair
- Woman with short blonde hair
- Woman wearing red
- Man wearing a blue cap
- Person carrying a shopping bag
- Child carrying a toy
- Family of four
- Man wearing a red tie
- Couple holding hands
- Person talking on a phone
- Man with a beard
- Person walking a dog
- Man with a mustache and no beard
- Redhead
- Twins or two people dressed alike
- Person wearing glasses