

## **3.1** Getting Started

Before you begin your walking program it is a good idea to:

- Visit your General Practitioner for a quick check up to see that you are fit and well to start exercising.
- Inform the local Council that a walking group is starting in their area.
- Ensure that you have a suitable pair of walking shoes.
- Get into a routine by setting specific times to walk and keeping to them.
- Start gradually do not try to do too much too soon.
- Build up the number of days that you walk.
- Build up the length of time that you walk, begin with a shorter length of time and aim for 30 to 40 minutes.
- Begin walking slowly, gradually increasing your speed and distance each time you walk.
- Do not build up the number of days, length of time walked, the pace and distance all at once, as you may over exert yourself.

Notes



## 3.2 How Much Walking is Enough?

Walking can be a great low cost activity for the improvement of health. The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians and the Department of Health's *Find Thirty* campaign recommend a total of at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity, such as walking on most days of the week to gain health benefits. These 30 minutes can be accumulated in shorter sessions of at least 10 minutes if you are just starting out. However, any walking is better than none. Some people may need to start gradually and slowly build up their level of activity. For inactive people, gentle strolling may be a good start.




### 3.2.1 How fast do I need to walk?

The intensity of activity is relative to an individual's fitness level. What is appropriate for one individual may be too slow or too fast for someone else. To gauge the correct pace, the individual should aim for:

- A pace that is enjoyable.
- A pace that they can continue for at least 30 minutes with the overall aim to complete a walk route set by leader (40–50 minutes). The longer the walk the better, but do not over do it at first.
- An intensity that makes you breathe a little faster, feel warmer, have a slightly faster heart beat, but still allows you to have a conversation, but not sing.

As a guide, the Royal Adelaide Hospital suggests you use the conversation test. When walking, if you talk and need to gasp for air you may be walking too quickly; so slow down. At the right walking speed you should be able to hold a conversation, your breathing will be a little faster, your heart rate will increase and you will feel warmer. After your walk you should feel that you have exercised slightly hard.

Notes 

## **3.3** **Planning the Walk Route for an Outdoor Community Walk**

### **Set a time**

- Consider the time of the year. Walks in summer may need to be earlier or later in the day than during winter to avoid the heat.
- Choose a time that you can regularly commit to.
- Consider what time of the day most people would normally walk for fitness. Often people prefer to walk at either the beginning or the end of the day during daylight hours.
- Consider finishing the walk at a café to provide a social option for participants at morning or afternoon tea time.

### **Place**

- The walk needs to be comfortable. This means taking into account the walking path, its width and whether it is an even surface, hills, obstacles and overhanging trees/ bushes etc. Check with the Local Council if any walk path maintenance or replacement is planned.
- Can the walk route be used by people with disabilities? For example, are there sloping curbs or ramps when crossing a road?
- The starting and finishing point needs to be convenient and accessible to local people. Is there adequate parking and access to public transport if needed?
- It is ideal to choose a starting place that offers a place to meet before and after the group so that you can socialise after your walks. Venues include meeting rooms, park with table chairs under shade, near a coffee shop or near the supporting organisation that may be able to provide a meeting room.
- Are there toilets, shade, water and rest areas?
- Are there any hazards or dangers along the route?
- Is the scenery of the walk interesting and varied?

## 3.4 Choosing the Best Route

### Keep them simple

- Each walk route should be easy to follow by those unfamiliar with them. Difficult routes may become frustrating and discourage individuals from participating.

### Make them easy to follow

- Clear maps with easy to follow directions can be a useful tool for all participants. List on the map a name for the walk, start time, distance, pace and approximate time to complete.

### Consider the target group when planning

- It is important to measure your walk route and time. Walk at the specific pace so that participants can select a walk of an appropriate length and time.
- Walks should be a minimum of 30 minutes with a maximum of 1 hour.
- The maximum distance (depending on the pace) should be approximately 4–5km.
- Design a walk route that is an appropriate challenge for the target group, some of whom may be sedentary. Don't forget, some people have very busy schedules. See Figure 1.0 for pace and distance.

**FIGURE 1.0: WALKING DISTANCE TABLE**

NOTE: This information should be used as a guide only and may vary amongst individuals and different ages.

WALKING SPEED (kilometers per hour)	TIME		
	10 minutes	20 minutes	30 minutes
SLOW	0.6km	1.2km	1.8km
MEDIUM	0.9km	1.8km	2.7km
FAST	1.1km	2.2km	3.3km

### **Cater for all abilities**

Consider variable options within your walk route. Ideally there will be different walks for different fitness levels. However this is not always possible and needs to be taken into consideration to appeal to a wider target group.

Consider the surroundings. Are they interesting and varied? Walking a route with boring surroundings can discourage individuals from participating. Check with your local Council for local history and points of interest information.


- Walking routes can be designed to cater for various fitness levels. A combination of flat areas and slight hill areas can work well. For example, if you are conducting an easy to medium walk, consider if you can safely incorporate alternate variations within the one walk route. Is there an option for a short cut? After reaching a certain point, can walkers pair up, turn around and meet the group back at the starting point?
- Resist the temptation to design longer and longer routes as the more experienced walkers can do this for themselves. It is non walkers that should be the target group and long walks will put them off.
- Consider changing the walk route every two to three months to maintain interest and motivation.
- Beware of starting on a hill.

### **Make the walks appealing**

- Easy access.
- Identify rest spots for the less fit, especially when they are first starting out.
- Look for an interesting physical environment.
- Consider a contrast in scenery e.g. open spaces, historical homes, etc.
- Keep hills to the middle of the walk when people have warmed up and before they get too tired.
- Try to have open views at the start of the walk when they can be stimulating.
- Talk to participants to see if they have any suggestions of places to walk when designing your next route.

**Watch out for**

- **Inaccessible locations** – This can be a particular problem for individuals who do not have their own transport, especially if locations are not regularly serviced by public transport.
- **Poor surface conditions** – Uneven surfaces can cause falls, also be aware of surface changes, especially in the wet.
- **Busy roads** – Avoid major roads and heavy traffic if possible. Aim for quieter streets and locations. If unavoidable, ensure that a safe place is identified if needing to cross a busy road.
- **Unsafe surroundings** – Avoid walking through areas which people may find worrying i.e. dark narrow alleyways.
- **Too many steep inclines** – Remember the main focus of the program is to encourage non-walkers to get out and be active. If there are a number of steep inclines, this will easily tire and frustrate those who aren't fit, and discourage them from returning.

Notes 

## **3.5** Program Promotion


### **The power of Word of Mouth**

- If walkers enjoy a fun social activity they are bound to tell their friends. This is one of the best forms of program promotion. Always encourage participants to bring a friend, even if they just come for a coffee in the first week. In addition tell people you know and new people that you meet about the walking program.
- Look for local opportunities to promote where possible. This may include putting up posters at local shops, putting a brief article in a local club or school newsletter and making further suggestions to the Program Coordinator.
- Have flyers on hand if people ask you about the group when you are out and leading walks.
- Promote your walking group to Local Government, Sport and Recreation, Population Health Unit

### **Exercise thoughts of the day**

These one-liners can be used to promote physical activity messages on flyers, letters and other printed materials.

- Use it or lose it!
- Have you had your 30 minutes of exercise today?
- Exercise you only have to take it regularly not seriously.
- Regular exercise helps you to live longer... and better.
- Walking is a great way to meet friends.



Notes

## **3.6** What Do I Wear?

### **Clothing**



- Choose clothing that is light, comfortable and not restrictive.
- Wear light layers so that when you are feeling warm you can remove a light jacket or top and tie it securely around your waist or shoulders.
- You may choose to wear shorts, ¾ pants or tracksuit pants, long pants, skirt or dress; whatever is comfortable for you.
- Choose light bright coloured clothes such as white and yellows which can be easily seen.
- For outdoor walking wear a hat and sunscreen.

### **Walking Footwear**



Comfortable, sturdy, light-weight walking shoes are the most important piece of equipment needed. Choose shoes that do not give you blisters.

When choosing the right walking shoes, check for:

- Shoes with a tough outer layer of rubber and a soft mid-sole that runs the full length of the sole.
- Uppers of high quality, breathable material, such as leather and/or nylon mesh.
- **Fastenings:** lace up shoes are preferable. Shoes need to be fastened by elastic, velcro or laces.
- **Collar:** comfortable padded heel collar.
- **Heel:** a firm heel that is slightly raised and holds your foot well for stability.
- Substantial arch supports.
- Entire shoe should be designed to absorb shock.
- **Toe box:** your toes should be able to spread freely and not feel squashed or tight.
- A sole designed specifically to enhance smooth heel-to-toe motion.
- **Socks:** choose natural fibre socks that allow for air circulation such as cotton or woollen socks.