

Surprising Benefits of Walking

Walking is becoming one of the top ways to stay in shape and free the mind, but there are many other surprising health benefits that make walking worth doing.

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- 1. Improve your sleep. By exercising, you boost the effect of sleep hormones, such as melatonin, and it can help you fall asleep easier than those who exercise less often.
- 2. Lessen your risk of bone and joint issues. Those who walk have the healthiest knees because walking can help maintain cartilage.
- **3. Tame your sweet tooth.** Walking for 15 minutes can reduce food cravings and the need to eat snacks that are high in sugar.
- 4. Slow your mental decline and lower your risk for Alzheimer's. Walking four times a week can have positive effects on those with mild cognitive impairment.
- 5. Walk to live a longer life. Those in their fifties and sixties are 35 percent less likely to die over the next eight years because of exercising regularly. Research also shows that those with underlying health conditions are 45 percent less likely to do die over the next eight years.

How to Keep Up the Habit

The Mayo Clinic offers some tips on how to stay motivated your daily routine.

- Start with a simple goal. Choose specific times that you will go on walks throughout your normal day. Pick a time limit and once it becomes a habit to go that far, start going further for longer.
- Try to make walking enjoyable. If you prefer to walk alone and listen to music, make that your routine. If that idea bores you or you need to be held accountable, walk with friends or neighbors to keep your routine exciting and keep you motivated.
- Vary routines. If you walk outside, choose different paths you can take. Make sure that they are well-lit and that someone knows where you are going to ensure safety. In case of weather issues, plan a route inside or walk around a mall to have a change in scenery and not miss your walk.
- Miss a day? Get back on track. If you miss a walk or two, remember how good you felt and remember the benefits of walking. Don't give up, get back on track.

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