

by Dixie L. Thompson, Ph.D., FACSM

Jazz Up Your Walk!

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Walking is the most popular form of exercise for U.S. adults. Regular walking helps control weight, improve cardiovascular disease risk factors, and lower the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

ACSM recommends that adults accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity on most, preferably all, days of the week. A brisk 30-minute walk performed at least five times per week can, over time, be expected to result in health improvements. However, this is the minimal recommendation, and for most health-related variables (particularly weight control), more is better!

To avoid becoming bored with your daily walks, here are some suggestions that you may find useful for reenergizing your walking routine.

✂ Find a New Route

To change your routine, identify walking trails and bike/walk paths in your area by contacting your local Parks and Recreation Department. Although these may take a bit of work to get to, they are often out of the traffic flow and provide a relaxing location for exercise.

✂ Build In Challenges

If you typically walk 2 miles in 30 minutes, try to finish the course in less time. Or, keep your walk time at 30 minutes but walk further during this period. You can also build slower- and faster-paced parts into your walk by walking faster from one landmark to another and then slowing your pace until you feel recovered. It is a way to

challenge yourself without the formal structure of interval training. Remember, make small changes as you increase the duration or intensity of your workouts to allow your body time to adapt.

✂ Take a Hike

Hiking is a great way to get exercise and clear your head from the daily grind. Most state and national parks have published lists of hiking trails with the length and difficulty indicated. If you hike, keep these things in mind:

- It is best to hike with at least one other person, and let others know which trail you will be hiking.
- Plan for the weather conditions.
- Wear shoes appropriate for the trail.
- Carry adequate water and food.

✂ Try New Toys

Pedometers can measure how far you walk in both daily activities and exercise bouts. You may find the goal of taking 10,000 steps per day useful for ensuring daily exercise, or use a pedometer to measure your daily steps without exercise and then set a target step goal so that you walk an extra 2 miles per day. A heart rate monitor also can serve as a motivational tool to help you get the most out of your walks. As you train, you will find that walking at the same pace will yield a lower heart rate. This means that you need to walk faster to get to the same target heart rate.

✂ Bring Along a Friend

Exercising with a friend will increase your enjoyment and also will help to promote good health in your friend. Although you may not be able to walk together every day, set specific days and times when your schedules allow. This will guarantee that you get those walks in.

Walking is an enjoyable, health-promoting activity that many can fit into their routines. As you walk for exercise, remember it does not have to be the “same old thing” every day. Try some of these ideas. You may just find something that reenergizes you!

Dixie L. Thompson, Ph.D., FACSM, is the director of the Center for Physical Activity and Health and an associate professor in the Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



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