

# HEALTH & WELLNEWS

Quarterly  
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WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

## At a Glance...



- ☞ Take a Walk ...
- ☞ The Ups & Downs of Blood Pressure

## Take a Walk...



Human beings were made to walk. Walking is convenient, safe, enjoyable and offers multiple health benefits. It is relatively easy on muscles and joints and carries a low risk of injury. No wonder walking is the number one choice of Canadians for physical activity!

If you want to walk, do it. Start today. If you enjoy it, you can do it again tomorrow. Enjoy the sights, sounds, and fresh air - and the fitness will take care of itself.



### How to Start:

- All you need is a good pair of shock-absorbing shoes.
- Stretch before and after walking. The heel-to-toe action of walking tends to tighten your calf muscles, so stretching the lower legs is important.
- Start slowly at a pace that is comfortable for you. Increasing your pace to a moderate rate will build stamina.
- Your gait or stride is important. As your foot comes in contact with the ground, your heel should strike first. Rock forward the whole length of your foot. As you prepare to lift your foot, your heel should come up first and you should push off with your toes.

### A Step-By-Step Approach:

- Walk Tall - Just keep your body straight letting your arms and legs do the work. Keep ears centered over shoulders, which in turn should be centered over hips. Don't slump. Keep your chest up and out and shoulders relaxed. Stride naturally and let your arms swing gently to develop rhythm and help.
- The Air You Breathe - Breathe deeply and rhythmically. Try breathing in for four paces and out for four.
- With a Little Help - Go with a friend, family member or dog. Seeking moral support will help you stick with it.
- Be Patient - It won't happen overnight, but it will happen. It may take up to six weeks to feel the benefits of regular walking.

### Why Take A Walk? Walking will assist:

- Cardiovascular health - walking increases your heart rate causing more efficient intake of oxygen.

- Muscular strength - a tonic for the muscles! Muscles in many different groups will be strengthened.
- Healthy bones - walk or you're chalk. A little regular weight bearing activity will help prevent osteoporosis which causes brittle bones, especially in women.
- Energy expenditure - walk off your wobbles. You'll burn calories, tone to your legs and help deflate that spare tire. Walking can even rival running as a calorie burner.
- Self-esteem - you will get fitter, your body will be more toned and you will feel better about yourself. Isn't it worth it?

If you feel sick, unwell, dizzy, or unusually tired, STOP and rest. When you start again, reduce your effort and pace. If these feelings continue, walk at a slower pace and check with your doctor.

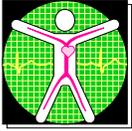
### Take a Hike Quiz...

1. The advantage of walking over other types of exercise is...
  - a) it is less strenuous
  - b) you don't need any special equipment
  - c) you can do it any time, anywhere
  - d) all of the above
2. You'll burn off more calories by...
  - a) gardening for 30 minutes
  - b) bicycling leisurely for 30 minutes
  - c) walking briskly for 30 minutes
  - d) jogging for 10 minutes
3. Walking with ankle weights...
  - a) promotes endurance
  - b) increases the risk of injury
  - c) burns off extra calories
  - d) builds more muscle
4. Walking 20 to 30 minutes a day, three times a week...
  - a) is all the exercise you need
  - b) should be stepped up after a while or you'll lose the benefits
  - c) needs to be supplemented by other forms of exercise
  - d) is too boring a regimen to sustain
5. Power walking and speed walking...
  - a) are challenges worth considering
  - b) should be left to the pros
  - c) can make you flat-footed
  - d) not only look ridiculous but offer few added benefits



Answers on the following page.

## The Ups and Downs of Blood Pressure



What's the most important number you should know? Not your net worth, age, or even the PIN number for your ATM card. It's your blood pressure. You should know this number and what it means.

Why is blood pressure important? High blood pressure, also called hypertension, affects millions of people in the U.S. and Canada. It is the major treatable risk factor for heart disease and stroke, yet only half of people with hypertension are being treated for it, and only half of those being treated have the disorder under control. You should be aware of the dangers of hypertension and know how to take steps to prevent and control it.

Note: Medications for hypertension are beyond the scope of this article and—if you need them—should be discussed with your doctor.

### How Blood Pressure Turns Into Hypertension

Blood pressure is created by the pumping action of your heart which moves blood through your circulatory system. When your heart contracts, the pressure exerted on the walls of your blood vessels is at its highest. Then as the heart relaxes, the pressure falls to its lowest level. Thus, blood pressure is expressed as two numbers: systolic (high point, during a contraction) and diastolic (low point, between heart beats).

A complex bodily system regulates blood pressure, which fluctuates normally according to your activity level and many other factors. Untreated hypertension can damage the arteries, resulting in damage to the brain, heart, and kidneys.

While anybody can develop hypertension, the major risk factors include:

- advancing age
- high sodium and/or alcohol intake
- a family history of hypertension
- being sedentary
- being overweight

Everybody, regardless of age, should have their blood pressure checked every two years. If you have elevated pressure, a family history of heart disease, or other risk factors, you may need more frequent monitoring. Talk to your doctor about what is right for you.



One high blood pressure reading does not always mean you have high blood pressure. It takes several readings to know for sure. If your blood pressure becomes high and stays high, your doctor will say you have "high blood pressure or hypertension."

### How can I prevent hypertension?

It's not certain that hypertension can be prevented but it's reasonable to think that the same practices that help control it might also prevent or postpone it. Here's what you can do:

1. **Maintain a healthy weight.** Losing even a few pounds if you're overweight can reduce blood pressure.
2. **Don't smoke.** A person with high blood pressure who smokes is at serious risk. Every cigarette raises blood pressure. Quitting lowers it. Stopping smoking may also help you get better results from high blood pressure treatment.
3. **Exercise regularly.** Exercise is useful in both preventing and treating hypertension. It can lower your blood pressure somewhat, though it's not understood exactly how this happens. Being active helps you control your stress which is one of the best natural tranquilizers.



If you already have high blood pressure, discuss your exercise program with your doctor before starting.

4. **Eat a diet rich in fruits, grains, vegetables and low-fat dairy products.** Recent studies have shown that as intake of fruits, grains, and vegetables rises, the risk of stroke drops.
5. **Keep your sodium intake low.** There's plenty of evidence that a high sodium intake increases blood pressure in some people. A high-sodium diet has no advantages and many disadvantages.
6. If you **drink alcohol, do so in moderation:** no more than one drink daily for a woman, or two for a man. For some people who take blood pressure medication, cutting back on alcohol increases the effectiveness of the medication.
7. **Take time to relax.** Controlling your stress level may also help control your blood pressure. Different things effect people in different ways. Pay attention to what gives you stress, and how it affects you.
8. **If you are taking medication, take it as the doctor prescribed it.** Never change or skip your medication, and never stop taking it without talking to your doctor.



Check with your doctor or pharmacist before buying over-the-counter drugs as some can increase your blood pressure. Keep an up-to-date list of all your medications handy.

*Answers to Take A Hike Quiz: 1.d) 2.c) 3.b) 4.c) 5.a)*

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