

Let's go winter walking!!

Don't let winter stop you from fitness walking or starting a walking program. Every minute counts towards improving your health whether it's a 5-kilometre walk around the neighbourhood or a ten-minute walk at the mall. You'll see an improvement in your energy level and feel better about yourself.

Finding a walking group to join (or create one), meeting up with a friend or making a commitment to walk with the family can help keep you motivated through the winter months.

Here's a 6-week schedule that will start you out with a new and motivating walking program.

Before you start, we have some suggestions to make your outdoor experience more enjoyable:

- Consider Yaktrax or Icers to help you stick to slippery snow and ice-covered surfaces.
These are wonderful gadgets that can be pulled over your shoes and have metal that grips the ice and snow.
- Layers of technical fabric clothing wicks sweat away from your body and helps keep you warm.
- Vaseline on exposed skin will minimize the chance of frostbite.
- Choose routes that are sheltered from the wind and if not, walk into the wind first.
- Make sure routes are as clear of snow and/or ice as possible.
- Warm-up your muscles by marching in place for three to five minutes followed by a series of stretches. Remember to BREATHE.
 - Shin stretch. Sit in a chair with your knees at a 90-degree angle and drag your right leg back so your toe is on the floor. Press down on your foot until you feel a stretch on the front of your leg. Try three 10-second stretches per shin. After your walk, try these shin stretches again.
 - Thigh stretch. Placing your left hand against a wall for balance (or a wall), grab your right ankle with your right hand and gently pull your heel toward your buttocks and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Stand tall and try not to arch your back. Switch sides and repeat.
 - Calf stretch. Stand 2 to 3 feet from a wall, with feet perpendicular to wall then lean against the wall for 10 to 30 seconds. Keep knees slightly bent. Make sure your rear heels stays on the floor. Switch legs and repeat.
 - Back stretch. Lying on your back, clasp one hand under each knee. Gently pull both knees toward your chest, keeping your

lower back on the floor. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds, relax, then repeat.

- Hamstring stretch. Lie on your back with both knees bent. Grasp behind the right thigh with both hands and pull toward your chest. Slowly straighten your leg, keeping your foot relaxed. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds, then lower leg, switch legs and repeat.
- Mix up your routine. Change the music you listen to while you walk – try slower music, such as jazz, for a slower, more leisurely pace and tune into up-tempo music for a faster stride.
- Try a different route every time you head out to give yourself a change of scenery.
- Set a goal to walk a charity 5 km or 10km in the Spring. This will help keep you focused.

Doesn't all this sound fun and we haven't even started walking!

Week One and Two

- Two easy walks (Tuesday and Thursday), 30 minutes, arms hanging by your side

Weeks Three and Four

- Two walks (Monday and Wednesday), 30 minutes, arms hanging by your side
- Two walks (Thursday and Saturday), 45 minutes total workout: arms hang by your sides for first 15 minutes, then bring the arms up to walk fast for 20 minutes, arms down for last 10 minutes.

Weeks Five and Six

- Two walks (Monday and Wednesday), 35 minutes total workout: arms hanging by your side for first 10 minutes, arms up for brisk walk for 20 minutes, arms down for 5 minute cool-down
- One walk (Thursday), 45 minutes total workout: arms hang by your side for first 10 minutes, then bring arms up to walk fast for 25 minutes, cool down for 10 minutes with arms hanging down
- * One walk (Saturday), 60 minutes total workout: arms hang by your side for first 10 minutes to warm up, bring arms up for fast walking for 20 minutes.
Now we pick up the pace: twenty minutes go as fast you can for about 100 metres then take a short 50 metre break walking slowly, repeat for 20 minutes, 5 minutes arms up fast walking, 10 minutes arms down to cool down.

Remember: please check with a physician prior to beginning any new exercise program!