



WALKING... TAKE THE S.M.A.R.T. STEP!

Walking is one of the healthiest activities you can choose to help you maintain and gain physical mobility. Taking a **S.M.A.R.T.** approach (**Stretch, Move, Add it up, Reduce Strain, Talk to a physiotherapist**) to your mobility will also enhance your enjoyment of this physical activity, whether you're just beginning to get out and walk or trying to gain more from your walking program.

The following S.M.A.R.T. tips for walking have been prepared for you by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) to help you get the most enjoyment out of a healthy and active walking season.

STRETCH – BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ACTIVITY

Stretching – as a warm-up, a break during repetitive movement, and a cool-down after your walk – helps you to move easily, keeps your muscles flexible and relaxed, your joints mobile, and relieves tension and strain.

A warm up before walking helps reduce the potential for muscle strain, injury and fatigue. Start out slowly on your route until you feel warm. Then take a few minutes to do the following stretches, and repeat them again at the end of your walk. On longer walks, it may be a good idea to stop and stretch at the mid-way point.

CALVES



HAMSTRINGS AND QUADS



BUTTOCK STRETCH



HIP FLEXOR



When stretching, remember:

- Movements should be slow and controlled to the point where you feel a gentle pull of the muscle. If this pull lessens, stretch a little more. It should never be painful;
- Once you feel a stretch, hold the position for 15-20 seconds. Do not bounce or jerk;
- Repeat each stretch three times in the same direction; repeat for the opposite side.

MOVE – TODAY FOR TOMORROW

Get moving. Keep moving. Stay moving. Through the seasons. Through life. “Just putting one foot in front of the other . . .” makes walking one of the easiest activities to incorporate into your daily and exercise routine.

- **Breathing:** Before starting out, relax and take a deep breath, which fills the lungs and moves them into their most efficient position. After you exhale, maintain the chest in this position, with shoulders down and slightly back. Throughout your walk, your speed should still allow you to carry on a conversation.
- **Arms:** Start with your arms hanging by your sides, loose and relaxed from your shoulders to your fingers. As you warm up, begin swinging the full length of your arms gently in keeping with your stride. You can get more of a work-out from your walking program by more vigorous arm movement or by swinging arms that are bent at a 90-degree angle. Remember to ease off and finish the walk with the same gentle, relaxed arm movements you began with.

...more

S This information sheet is part of the CPA's **S.M.A.R.T.** approach to your mobility (focusing on **Stretching, Moving, Adding it up, Reducing Strain** and **Talking to a physiotherapist**). The information provided is intended for general use and is not meant to substitute for the professional, personal assessment your physiotherapist offers.

1 Cette fiche de renseignements fait partie du programme de l'ACP « **cinq points** pour assurer votre liberté de mouvement » (**1. Étirez-vous; 2. Bougez; 3. Ajoutez les minutes; 4. Réduisez la fatigue; 5. Consultez un physiothérapeute**).

2

3

4 Ces renseignements sont fournis à titre général seulement et ne prétendent pas remplacer l'évaluation professionnelle, personnalisée offerte par votre physiothérapeute.

5

www.physiotherapy.ca



Canadian
Physiotherapy
Association

Association
canadienne de
physiothérapie

cont'd: WALKING... TAKE THE S.M.A.R.T. STEP

ADD IT UP – AN HOUR IS POWER

To *gain* mobility, plan activities throughout your day that keep you moving for periods of at least 10 minutes. To *maintain* your mobility, make every movement count. Add up all you do in a day and aim for a minimum of 60 minutes of *movement* every day. For maximum benefit, physiotherapists recommend regular physical activity and stretching to maintain your physical mobility throughout the year.

- **Pace yourself!** Start your walking season slowly if you haven't been active over the winter. Take time to recover between longer outings – keep walking, but for shorter distances or at slower speeds;
- **With proper clothing and footwear**, you can plan your walks 12 months of the year.

REDUCE STRAIN – USE GEAR THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Walking shoes, waist pouches, backpacks, etc., are meant to ease the load, not cause additional strain. Take measures to fit your gear to *you*, not you to your gear.

- Shop around for the right shoe. Your physiotherapist can make suggestions of what to look for in a walking shoe that best suits your needs and walking program;
- Replace old shoes. The average life of a walking shoe is approximately 400 to 600 miles (620 to 800 km);
- Monitor your posture and body mechanics. Make sure your head, shoulders and hips are lined up over your feet for a good walking posture;
- Keep your stride comfortable. Too long a stride makes for “overstride” - muscles tighten up and tire before your walk is done;
- Plan your walk route for your comfort (fairly flat for beginners, low hills for intermediate and steeper inclines for advanced);
- Walk the same route every other day. Rotate routes (from incline to flat, sidewalk to grass) to keep things interesting and to avoid over-use injuries;
- **Don't** use wrist or ankle weights while walking as they put too much added stress on your joints.

TALK TO A PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity.

How do I find a physiotherapist?

Finding a physiotherapist may vary from province to province. Here are some suggestions:

- Check the yellow pages of your local telephone book for listings of physiotherapists and physiotherapy clinics. You can make an appointment with a physiotherapist directly anywhere in Canada.
- Ask for a recommendation from your family doctor. While a direct referral is not necessary, your physician may be able to suggest a physiotherapist for your particular concern. Further, while many physiotherapy services are covered by provincial health care plans, Workers Compensation plans and private insurance, some insurance companies require a doctor's referral for reimbursement.
- Visit the web site of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association at www.physiotherapy.ca. to access our “Find A Physiotherapist” directory and to find out more information about physiotherapy. The CPA web site can also link you to resources for finding physiotherapists through provincial association branches and regulatory colleges.