

WALKING FOR HEALTH

THE 10,000 STEPS PROGRAM

What is the 10,000 steps program?

A lifestyle approach to fitness that involves wearing a pedometer. This electronic device counts the number of steps a person takes during the day, with 10,000 steps being the ultimate goal.

Where did it originate?

The idea for 10,000 steps originated in Japan as a way of promoting walking.

Why 10,000 steps?

Active people, on average, take at least 10,000 steps a day. Inactive people take 2,000 to 4,000.

Does it really work?

Lifestyle interventions such as this (walking) are found to be just as effective in terms of health benefits as the more traditional fitness approaches.

What should you do besides wear a pedometer?

The most effective programs involve setting and recording goals, writing daily steps taken in a log book, and social support to help with motivation.

Why is this program right for me?

The great thing about 10,000 steps is it fits easily into people's lives. Walking is the most popular physical activity for adults in Canada; it is safe and can be done anytime, anywhere.

Is it necessary to wear a pedometer to increase my activity?

No, it's not necessary, but it helps with motivation. People who have used pedometers have commented that pedometers gave meaning to walking, helped them become more health conscious, and helped prevent staying home and watching TV. Over half of participants in a pilot program claimed that the pedometer alone was most effective in helping them increase their physical activity.

How do I get started?

Wear the pedometer for a week, without changing your activity level, and record the total steps taken each day. At the end of seven days, calculate the average steps per day. From this, increase by 3,500 steps a week (500 steps a day) until the 10,000 mark is reached. Of course, if you're already quite active, feel free to exceed 10,000 steps, but don't overdo it. If you're quite inactive, take it slow; an increase of 250 steps per day might be more realistic.

How do I increase my steps?

The ultimate goal of this program is to make small, steady changes that increase your level of activity. Try taking the stairs rather than the elevator throughout the day, park a little farther from your destination or get off the bus a few stops early, go for a ten minute walk before lunch, and walk to the video store on a Sunday. You'll be surprised by how quickly the steps add up!

WANT TO WALK MORE?

- Contact your *local recreation department* to find out about walking clubs and trails in your area.
- Start a *walking group* –just you and a buddy or the whole neighborhood.
- Wear a walkman and *move to the music*, but stay alert to traffic.
- Don't like that rainy or snowy weather? Find out about indoor '*mall walking*'.
- *Tips for walking*:
 - Wear proper footwear.
 - Wear comfortable clothing.
 - Start out slowly, warm up, and stretch.
- Some *walking programs in Nova Scotia*:
 - **Hearts in Motion™ Walking Clubs** (Heart and Stroke Foundation) – This involves the marking of designated trails in kilometer or half-kilometer intervals. The signs allow walkers to set goals and monitor how far they walk. There are designated trails in Halifax Regional Municipality, Pictou County, Central Kings County, and Yarmouth. Call 1-800-423-4432 for details.
 - **Walk-A-Block Program** (Annapolis County) – This is based on the Walk-a-Block Program of America which encourages walking for health benefits. This workplace program encourages employees of participating companies to walk fifteen minutes a day during work breaks. This program could be started in your community. For more information go to the web site: www.annapoliscounty.ns.ca/rec/info.html

PEDOMETERS - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- **How They're Used:** Clip onto a belt or waist band to measure hip swings.
- **What They Do:** Count steps taken.
- **Additional Features:** Distance calculation, calorie calculation, clock, timer, alarm, finger pulse monitor, music, talking.
- **Where to buy:** Local sports, electronics, or department stores; the Internet.
- **Average Cost:** \$15-40
- **The Scoop:** An average pedometer will cost about \$20 and will track steps, calculate distance, and calculate calories (the basics for most people who want to walk more). Features like timers and pulse monitors may be more useful to runners. Of course, like anything, choice of a pedometer is individual.

WEB SITES

www.walking.about.com	(Walking tips, programs)
www.trails.gov.ns.ca	(Trail information project)
www.trailtc.ns.ca	(Trans Canada Trail in Nova Scotia)
www.walklink.com	(The Interactive Website for Walkers)
www.10000steps.cqu.edu.au	(10,000 steps on-line program based in Australia)
www.thewalkingsite.com/steps	(Tips on walking and the 10,000 steps program)
www.bodytronics.com	(Pedometers)
www.digiwalker.com	(Pedometers)