



# Senior Series

*The Ohio  
Department of  
Aging*



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**SS-105-R04**

## Wonderful Walking

### **Walking: A simple, healthy, and fun way to do your body good!**

Techniques for stretching, breathing, and stress reduction go a long way in enhancing and improving your health. Some persons, however, may wish to go beyond these techniques to improve their fitness. Active exercise does wonders to improve a person's outlook on life and boost their immune system. The simplest exercise is walking. A walking program of just 15 minutes has been shown to have a calming affect that lasts more than one hour. After just six weeks, a progressive walking program can result in significant physical improvement. As with any exercise program, check with your physician before beginning, and start gradually to prevent injury and sore muscles.

### **Target Your Heart**

Walking is an aerobic exercise. This means that walking improves the cardiovascular system—the heart, lungs, and circulatory system. Walking exercises

the heart by increasing the number of beats per minute. An aerobic walking program lowers heart rates because the heart becomes more efficient, even at rest.

The results of a walking program can be documented by keeping track of your pulse. To take your pulse, place your first two fingers (not your thumb) on the thumb side of your wrist below your wrist bone. When you feel your pulse, count the number of beats for 10 seconds and then multiply that by 6 to find out how many times per minute your heart beats. To receive maximum benefits, your heart rate needs to be in the "target heart range." You can determine this range by subtracting your age from 220. Multiply that result by 0.70 and 0.80. Those two numbers will represent the low and high of your target heart rate range.

### **Warming Up**

Before any exercise, it's important to take the appropriate steps to warm up

stiff muscles. Begin with a slow 5 to 10 minute walk. After you have completed the slow walk, you can begin stretching. There are two steps to stretching properly. In the “easy” stretch, stretch to a point where you feel mild tension, relax, and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Gently proceed further into the “second” portion of that stretch by moving a fraction of an inch, until you again begin to feel a mild tension, hold for 10 to 30 seconds. You should feel the tension gradually ease off. Now it is time to start walking!

Follow these hints as you start your walking program:

- Set aside a certain time during the week for your exercise.
- Avoid exercising right after eating.
- Wear shoes that provide good support.
- Dress more lightly than usual for the weather because exercising will raise your body temperature. In cooler weather, wear layers of clothing that can be removed as you warm up.
- During hot weather, walk in the evening or early morning to avoid the heat and use sunscreen to protect your skin.

## Five Points of Correct Walking

1. Move at a steady, comfortable pace. Check your pulse to see if you are hitting your target heart rate.
2. Hold your head high and keep your back straight. Move your feet in a straight line while moving your arms in rhythm to your steps.
3. Land on your heel. Roll forward and push off from the balls of your feet.
4. Take easy, comfortable strides.
5. Breathe deeply. Breathing through your mouth may work best for you.

Walking is relatively easy on the joints and doesn't require any special equipment except a good pair of shoes. It will reduce your risk of certain diseases, lower your blood pressure, decrease stress, and improve your strength. Walking **IS** Wonderful! Enjoy!

## References

Extracted from: *Senior Series Volume 1*, The Center on Rural Elderly, University of Missouri System.

Paffenbarger, Jr., M.D., & Olsen, Eric. (1996). *Lifefit: An Effective Exercise Program for Optimal Health and a Longer Life*. Printed in the United States of America.

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