



WALKING TO BETTER HEALTH

Spring is here! This is a great time of year to spend some time outside, enjoying the warmer weather and fresh air! At Maple Tree, we believe that this is the very best time to start a walking program! After all, where else can you find a form of exercise with so many health benefits, that is so easy to do... and FREE?

Why walk?

Walking is not only an extremely effective physical activity, but also gives you a mental boost, as well! Here are just some of the benefits you will find when you begin a walking program:

Strengthen your Heart

Research indicates that walking at least 30 minutes/day, 5 days/week can reduce the risk of heart disease by 19%!

Lower Blood Sugar

Walking just 15 minutes three times/day improves blood sugar levels! To receive these benefits, it is recommended to walk after each meal.

Boosted Immune Function

A recent study tracked 1,000 adults during flu season and found that those who worked 30–45 minutes each day had 43% fewer sick days and less upper-respiratory tract infections. If they did get sick, their symptoms were less severe compared to their sedentary counterparts.



Improved Sleep

Studies show that women between the ages of 50-75 who walked for at least one-hour each day had better quality sleep and less insomnia than those who did not walk.

Joint Support

Most of the joint cartilage in our bodies have no direct blood supply. It receives nutrition from the joint fluid that circulates as we move. When we walk, the movement compresses the cartilage, which brings oxygen and nutrients to the area and strengthens the cartilage.

Mood Lifter

When you walk, your body releases endorphins, which in turn, improves your mood! This is just one of the many emotional benefits of exercise!

Strengthens Muscles

Walking tones your legs and abdominal muscles, which increases your range of motion and helps you get through your daily activities with greater ease.

Weight Loss

Walking for just 30-minutes can burn as many as 200 calories! Overtime, this can help you drop some unwanted pounds!

Strengthen Your Bones

Since walking is a weight-bearing activity, it can stop the loss of bone mass observed with osteoporosis. One recent study found that post-menopausal women who walked for 30 minutes each day saw a 40% reduction in risk of hip fractures.

How to Begin

Starting a walking program is easy! Here are some simple steps to get you started.

Set Realistic Goals

Duration: Start where you are, with a duration that will not tire you out too much. If walking for 20 minutes straight makes you too exhausted, then start with 10 minutes. Then increase your time by 2 minutes each week as you get stronger. Strive to reach 30 minutes of continuous walking.

Frequency: After you reach your duration goal, then you can gradually add more days of walking each week. Your goal should be to walk for at least 30 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week.

Intensity: You should be able to talk while you are walking. If you find that you are having difficulty getting your words out or catching your breath, slow down your pace. If you want to challenge yourself, try to walk faster or find a route with hills.



Schedule It

Adding your walk to your calendar will ensure that it gets accomplished – after all, what gets planned, gets done! If you are a morning person, then take your walk first thing in the morning. If you prefer evenings – then go for a walk after dinner! Scheduling a regular walking time with a friend is a great way to hold yourself accountable and makes it much harder to skip! Having a dog to walk also helps keep you moving as well!

Get comfortable shoes

You will want to have comfortable walking shoes before you get started. The last thing you want is to end up with blisters, or put yourself at risk for falling because of improper foot wear. A good walking shoe has good padding, is water resistant, and is flexible from heel to toe. They should be loose enough so that you can wiggle your toes, but tight enough so that your foot doesn't slide around and cause you to fall. Similarly, your clothes should be comfortable, loose-fitting, and breathable.

Have a plan

Bad weather is inevitable. You can work around it by bringing an umbrella or walking inside at a local mall. If you miss a day, have a plan to make up for it over the course of the week. Don't let one missed day stop you from continuing your walking program!

Hydrate

When you exercise, you lose water more quickly. If your water levels get too low, you might feel tired, nauseated, dizzy, or confused. Be sure to drink extra water before your walk, and if it is hot outside, consider taking more water with you on your walk!

Now that you have everything you need, let's get started!

