April 2024

Live Well, Work Well

The Benefits Resource

The Health Benefits of Walking

Walking is often overlooked as a form of exercise; however, it offers several health benefits for the body and mind. This simple yet powerful activity is accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels, requiring no special equipment, memberships or training. By boosting physical fitness and enhancing mental well-being, incorporating regular walks into your routine can improve overall health.

> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends moderate-intensity aerobic exercise—such as brisk walking—for 150 to 300 minutes a week.

Physical Health Benefits of Walking

Walking is a natural, low-impact form of exercise that can yield notable improvements in physical fitness. Simply putting one foot in front of the other can unlock a myriad of benefits for your body, including:

- Increased cardiovascular health (e.g., lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels)
- Improved respiratory health
- Strengthened muscles and joints
- Boosted immune function
- Weight management support
- Reduced risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers

Mental Health Benefits of Walking

Beyond its physical benefits, walking also holds immense potential for nurturing one's mental well-being and emotional balance. Consider these benefits:

- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved mood and emotional well-being
- Enhanced cognitive function and reduced risk of cognitive decline and dementia
- Better sleep patterns and quality

Get Walking Today

Whether it's a leisurely stroll through nature or a brisk walk around the block, incorporating regular walks into your routine can improve both body and mind. Walking for 30 minutes at least five days a week is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health and well-being.

While brisk walking is safe for most people, it's still important to talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program.

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Nip Seasonal Allergies in the Bud

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one-quarter (25.7%) of adults suffer from seasonal allergies. Springtime allergies are an annual nuisance for many people as plants bloom and neighbors cut their lawns more frequently. Also, mold growth occurs indoors and outdoors, making it almost impossible to escape allergy triggers. Consider these strategies to alleviate your spring allergy symptoms, such as sneezing, stuffy or runny nose, and watery eyes:

- Keep track of local allergen (e.g., pollen and mold) counts to help you know when to avoid spending excessive time outside.
- Take a shower after spending time outdoors, as pollen can stick to your hair, skin and clothing.
- Wash your bedding weekly in hot water to help keep pollen under control.
- Clean your floors often with a vacuum that has a HEPA filter.
- Change your air conditioner and heating HEPA filters often.

For many people, avoiding allergens and using over-the-counter medications are enough to ease their allergy symptoms. Talk to your doctor if your symptoms remain bothersome.

Understanding Pollen Seasons in the United States

Pollen is one of the most common seasonal allergy triggers. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, these are plants' pollen seasons:

2024's Best Diet: The Mediterranean

U.S. News & World Report named the Mediterranean diet the world's best overall diet for the seventh consecutive year, ranking first in 7 of the 11 diet categories. The winning meal plan emulates how people in the Mediterranean region have traditionally eaten, focusing on consuming whole grains and heart-healthy fats. This diet may help support brain function, promote heart health and regulate blood sugar levels. Research also suggests that this well-balanced eating pattern can help prevent some chronic diseases and increase longevity.

A nonrestrictive, healthy meal plan such as the Mediterranean diet may be easier to follow and stay committed to. If you have any questions about your diet, talk to your doctor.

Mediterranean Chicken and White Bean Salad

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients

1 cup skinless cooked chicken (diced into ½-inch pieces)

15.5 oz. can low-sodium white beans (drained, rinsed with cold water)

1 cucumber (peeled, diced into ½-inch pieces)

¼ red or white onion (peeled, chopped into ½-inch pieces)

2 Tbsp. vegetable oil

¼ cup lemon juice

1 Tbsp. dried basil or parsley leaves

¼ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. black pepper

Preparations

1. Put all ingredients in the bowl and gently toss.
2. Serve it immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to two days.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total calories	297
Total fat	11 g
Protein	20 g
Sodium	288 mg
Carbohydrate	31 g
Dietary fiber	8 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Total sugars	2 g

Source: MyPlate