



## Walking the Way to Health Initiative (WHI)

More and more people are taking advantage of local health walks, designed to encourage people to walk for their health whilst enjoying local greenspaces.

The walks are varied to ensure access for everyone regardless of age and ability. These are a great way to meet other people living in your local area.

A programme of regular walks has been developed locally in many London Boroughs led by trained volunteer walk leaders. For more information on how to find a health walk in your area, please go to [www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)



## Stick with it

Here are some tips to help you to keep motivated:

- Circle each day that you walk on your calendar to show your progress.
- Any comfortable shoes will do for walking. Why not leave them by the door to remind you to walk?
- Establish a routine - go for a stroll with family or friends.
- Take the stairs, even for one flight, every day instead of the lift.
- Get involved - join a regular health walk
- Get a pedometer and challenge yourself to walk more steps.
- Look at your Local Authority or Primary Care Trust website, library, or GP surgery and find out what walking activities are going on in your local area.
- For advice on walking call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

# Even a short walk is a workout



walk 4 life



**THINK FEET FIRST** !

## How important is walking?

Walking is an ideal form of exercise. Our body has been designed to walk. We've been doing it for over 1 million years. However, today we do much less than our grandparents did. Walking every day can help ensure our hearts, minds, bones and muscles are working properly as well as helping us feel better.

[www.thinkfeetfirst.com](http://www.thinkfeetfirst.com)

Becoming even a little bit more active can reduce the amount of fat in our body and lessen the risk of life-threatening diseases like cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. You will benefit immediately through enhanced energy levels, feeling less tired and having less chance of depression.



### Case study: a new mum

*"I found organised walks have helped significantly in increasing my fitness, encouraged me to walk on other days of the week and helped me lose the weight I had put on during pregnancy."*

### Reasons to walk

- Nearly half of all journeys are walkable.
- Walking can be a good way to meet like-minded people and can be a great way to spend time with the family.
- A walk boosts your immune system for 24 hours, helping you fend off colds and other infections.
- Walking is a convenient form of exercise that can fit into your daily routine, doesn't feel like a chore and can help you look and feel younger.
- Walking can help save you money on travel or petrol costs.
- Walking helps save the planet. Walking for just 11 minutes twice a day 5 days a week could save 11 stone of CO<sub>2</sub> over the course of a year.
- Walking provides a natural high - releasing natural endorphins into the blood.
- Walking can provide opportunities to reflect and gather your thoughts, helping to reduce stress and manage anxiety.
- The amount of calories you burn will depend on the individual, speed and terrain – but on average 100 calories per mile or 20 minutes walking.



### How often

The current recommendation for physical activity, including walking, is just **30 minutes a day** of moderate activity for adults or **60 minutes a day** for children. You don't have to do this in one go to start with, but can break it down into smaller chunks.

### How safe

Walking can help improve or prevent most common conditions and make you feel more energetic with virtually no side effects. Walking is also good for your bones and joints, helping to strengthen and protect them by building up muscle. If it was a tablet we would want to take it every day. If you have a medical condition then talk to your doctor if you are not sure if it is the right exercise for you.

### How fast

The ideal speed of walking is at a moderate pace – this means walking so you breathe a little faster, feel a little warmer and have a slightly faster heart beat.