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Welcome to *WalkingWorks*

Walking works – in a lot of ways. A brisk-paced walk can help you and your family look and feel better, increase energy, and pick up your spirits.

Walking can work to improve your health, too. A regular routine of brisk-paced walking daily can help you lose weight, lower cholesterol, strengthen your heart, and reduce the likelihood of serious health problems down the road. And with America spending more than ever on preventable health problems like heart disease, osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, and conditions associated with obesity such as arthritis, every step counts.

While any increase in walking will help promote good health, the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports recommends 30 minutes a day, on five or more days a week, or 10,000 steps daily, to produce the best, long-term health benefits for most individuals. That is why Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has launched *WalkingWorks*, the Blue Program for a Healthier Nebraska.

***WalkingWorks* for Everyone**

Walking has gained acceptance as an excellent way to improve health and maintain healthy weight. It's safe, simple and cost-free, and it doesn't take a lot of practice. It's something you can do alone or with friends, indoors or outside, any time of the year.

Believe it or not, according to the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, reports that walking one mile burns about 100 calories depending on intensity, pace and speed. According to the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, when done briskly on a regular basis, walking can

- Decrease your risk of a heart attack;
- Decrease your chance of developing diabetes;
- Help control your weight;
- Improve your muscle tone; and
- Promote your overall sense of wellness.

Get started on the path to improved health and physical fitness by starting the *WalkingWorks* program today.

Getting Started – It's Easy!

Get advice on [walking basics](#), [starting the *WalkingWorks* program](#) and get a downloadable copy of the [WalkingWorks daily log](#).

WalkingWorks Resources

Learn how to incorporate walking into your daily life with [tips on easy ways to add steps to your day](#).

WalkingWorks for Everyone

Get Started – It's Easy!

Walking Basics

- Before you start your walking program, be sure to follow a few basic principles that will keep you safe and comfortable:
- If you have a health condition or have not done any regular physical activity for a long time (men over 40, women over 50), talk with your doctor before starting any new exercise program.
- Choose comfortable, supportive shoes, such as running, walking, or cross training shoes, or light hiking boots.
- If you're going for a longer walk, warm up with stretching exercises and include a cool-down period to reduce stress on your heart and muscles.
- Maintain a brisk pace. You should work hard to keep up your pace but still be able to talk while walking.
- Practice correct posture – head upright, arms bent at the elbow and swinging as you stride.

Drink plenty of water before, during and after walking to cool working muscles and keep your body hydrated.

WalkingWorks for Everyone

Get Started – It's Easy!

Starting the *WalkingWorks* Program

The U.S. Surgeon General reports that a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most days of the week can produce long term health benefits. The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports recommends at least 30 minutes a day, on five or more days a week, or 10,000 steps daily, measured by a pedometer. *WalkingWorks* is designed for everyone, so even if you have a chronic health condition or are seriously overweight, or if you are already in great shape, you will learn how to set a goal that makes sense for you.

10,000 steps may seem like a lot, but you're probably walking more than you think. And by making simple choices like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, walking to the store instead of driving, parking at the back of the parking lot instead of the front – you'll be surprised at how quickly the steps add up. Add 30 to 60 minutes of brisk-paced walking a day and you're there!

On this Web site, you'll find everything you need to start a regular walking routine – no matter what your fitness level. All you really need is a good pair of shoes.

Counting your steps is easy with a pedometer. A pedometer senses your body motion and counts your footsteps. This count is converted into distance by knowing the length of your usual stride.

Your WalkingWorks Plan

To avoid injury, it is important to start out slowly. Unless you are already walking a lot, it may take a while before you reach the 10,000 steps goal. Follow these steps to establish your individual goal and shape your program:

1. **BASELINE.** If you are using a pedometer, count your steps for seven days; if you don't have a pedometer, follow the recommendations of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports — begin with 30 minutes of brisk-paced walking at least five days each week. Keep a log to track the amount of daily walking activity you are currently doing. This will establish your baseline. Include all of your normal walking activities, such as walking up the stairs at home, walking to work, etc. At the end of each day, tally your total

steps in the walking log. If you are not using a pedometer, keep track of the minutes you spend walking.

2. *BENCHMARK.* Your benchmark is the highest number of steps you walked on any given day while establishing your baseline the first week. Use that number as your daily goal for the second and third weeks. Log your daily walks, and at the end of the third week, review your log. If you averaged your goal, add another 500 steps or several more minutes to your daily goal for the fourth and fifth weeks.
3. *BUILD.* At the end of each 2-week period, try to add 500 steps or several more minutes to your walking goal. If you had difficulty reaching your goal, walk at the same level until you build enough endurance to increase your target. Continue to log your activity to prevent slipping back or dropping out. If you find yourself falling behind your average daily goal, try not to become discouraged. To maintain your motivation, keep logging your progress and stay with the same number of steps or minutes instead of increasing your target.

Keep in mind that 10,000 steps may not be a realistic goal for everyone. If you are very overweight or have other chronic health problems, talk with your doctor to determine a goal that may be more appropriate.

Is 10,000 Steps Too Few for You?

For some people, 10,000 steps are too few to meet ultimate health or weight loss goals. For example, individuals who are already walking 7,000 or 8,000 steps per day may not get enough benefit from increasing to just 10,000. If this applies to you, ultimately aim to add a total of 7,600 steps to your current daily total, adding 500 steps every two weeks as indicated in the plan. You can also add hills, stairs, or arm weights to your routine, to make your walks more challenging.

WalkingWorks for Everyone

Get Started – It's Easy!

***WalkingWorks* Log**

Use this log to track your progress every day. Reward yourself as you make progress toward your goals. As you track your steps, take a few minutes each day to sit down and relax. Think about the good feelings that exercise gives you, and reflect on what you've accomplished. This type of internal reward can help you make a long-term commitment to regular exercise.

Your commitment to a “healthier you” can also mean a healthier America. That's why, as a *WalkingWorks* participant, you and your family are eligible to take the President's Challenge and receive a Presidential Active Lifestyle Award. This award is sponsored by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports to recognize Americans of all ages for committing to a program of regular physical activity, like *WalkingWorks*. Adults and children can achieve the award together – it's a great way for families to work together – everyone benefits!

Log on to www.presidentschallenge.org to find out more about America's way to recognize your commitment and achievement.

External rewards can also help keep you motivated. When you reach a longer-range goal, consider treating yourself to a new pair of walking shoes or a new CD to accompany you on your walks.

Click here for a [printer-ready copy of the log](#).

WalkingWorks for Everyone

WalkingWorks Resources

Easy Ways to Add Steps to Your Day

Exercise doesn't have to be a rigid, time-consuming activity. In fact, it shouldn't be thought of in terms of *one* activity. That is why we like the 10,000-a-day concept so much – walking your dog, walking with your child to the park, walking to and from the parking lot, taking the stairs instead of the elevator can all be parts of a daily exercise routine that together add up to 10,000 steps.

The challenge is to think creatively about ways you might add “steps” to your day. Here are just a few ideas:

- Take the stairs as often as possible
- Park several blocks from your destination or park at the rear of the parking lot
- Walk the last few blocks instead of riding the bus all the way to work
- Get off the elevator below your destination and walk a couple of flights of stairs
- Park at the opposite end of the mall from where you need to shop
- Walk to do shopping or other errands

Consider adding other walking routines to your day by organizing a lunchtime walking group at work, or a before- or after-work group with friends or neighbors. Instead of watching television after dinner, get the whole family outside for a game of tag, Frisbee or a walk around the block. Try not to get stuck in the “all or nothing” rut – even if you don't have time for a long walk, you might be able to squeeze in a short one, or at least take the stairs.

Home Page

[Links to Health Organizations and Resources](#)

For additional information on the benefits of walking and other health issues, please check out the following organizations and resources.

American Diabetes Association: www.diabetes.org

American Heart Association: www.americanheart.org

American Lung Association: www.lungusa.org

Arthritis Foundation: www.arthritis.com

National Institutes of Health – Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases National Resource Center: www.osteoporosis.gov

National Stroke Association: www.stroke.org

Colon Cancer Alliance: www.coloncanceralliance.org

American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org

American Obesity Association: www.obesity.org

Incentives

While *WalkingWorks* participants will be rewarded with better health, we can all use an incentive or two to get us going.

As you implement your program, you might want to consider offering a few incentives to your employees. Incentives can help get people interested in the program and they can help keep them interested. Incentives can include:

T-shirts

Pedometers and pedometer 'cardholders'

Discounts on walking shoes

Discounts on fitness clubs

Lunchtime walking groups

Time-off to walk

Vacation days

Walking time with your boss

Subscriptions to fitness magazines

Pedometer steps point system- to earn athletic bags, athletic gear, radios, etc.

Competitions between departments

Walking bracket

Certificates & ribbons for participation

Partnerships with local stores- i.e. walk to Starbucks for pre-arranged discounted rates

Walk to Work- reimburse employers for what they would've spent on parking

Newsletter highlighting *WalkingWorks* participants & activities