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Health & Wellness
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Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and health care specialists at American Health & Wellness Group.

Fitness First: Exercise and Healthy Eating

In addition to trimming your waistline, regular exercise and healthy eating will help you feel better, think more clearly and live a longer, healthier life.

Start Sensibly

Don't begin your exercise program too ambitiously. The key to success is to start slowly and increase the difficulty of your workouts as you become more fit. Those who overdo it often experience muscle soreness, become discouraged and quit. Rather than trying to run three miles on your first day, begin by running a mile and increasing your distance as your fitness level improves. Most importantly, remember that feeling dizzy or ill is your body's way of telling you that you are working too hard. If this happens, take a break or stop your workout for the day.

At What Pace Should I Be Exercising?

Exercise should be fairly comfortable for you. Your pace should be just below the point at which you start to breathe quickly. Exercising at this pace produces two desirable results: it mobilizes fat burning and helps you develop endurance.

This means that for maximum fat burning, longer, slower exercise is more beneficial than short, strenuous workouts. If you are reasonably fit and are exercising at the proper pace, you should burn between 400 and 600 calories per hour during any aerobic exercise. This includes riding a stationary bicycle, walking or running on a treadmill or using a stair climber.

Counting Calories Means Trimming the Fat

The media is full of varying reports on how to lose or maintain weight. It's no wonder that you may be confused about what foods to eat and what to avoid. Most experts agree that eating a well-balanced diet low in fat is the key to losing weight. Since fat contains more than twice the calories of carbohydrates or protein, high-fat food equates to higher calories. While lowering your fat intake is important, it is also

important to monitor your calorie intake. Your ideal caloric intake depends on your age, body size and level of activity. Generally, women ages 23 to 50 need an average of 1,600 calories per day, while men in the same age group require about 1,800 calories per day.

For more information about healthy eating, visit: www.mypyramid.gov.



Did you know...?

If you burn at least 150 extra calories per day, you significantly reduce your risk of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, colon cancer, anxiety and depression.



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Fitness First: Walking

If you are looking for an easy and inexpensive way to stay healthy or lose weight, you need nothing more than your own two feet. Walking is an ideal form of exercise; it's free, and you can do it almost anytime and anywhere. Walking is also a great way to maintain a healthy weight or to shed those extra pounds.

The First Step: Good Shoes

Whether you walk outdoors, on a treadmill or at the local mall, you will want to invest in a good pair of walking shoes. Walking shoes are designed to give you the flexibility, proper support and the proper push off needed for walking. Everyone's feet are different, but look for shoes that are light, flexible and immediately feel comfortable. Walking shoes should not require a "breaking in" period.

Setting the Pace

You can walk to maintain your health or as part of a weight-loss program. To get moving, experts advise beginners to start with a 15 or 30 minute walk daily, adding five or 10 minutes to the walking session time per week. More specifically:

- To maintain your health, walk 30 minutes a day most days of

the week at a "talking" pace, which means you are able to carry on a conversation comfortably while walking.

- If you are walking for weight loss, walk 45 to 60 minutes a day at a medium to fast pace. In addition, do not skip more than two days per week.
- For aerobic and cardiovascular fitness, walk 20 minutes at a very fast pace (you should be breathing hard), three to four days a week.

After walking, gentle stretching can help keep your muscles from being sore. It is also wise to warm up before walking fast or going a long distance.

Cautions

Make sure to be safe while walking outside:

- Always walk on sidewalks (or on the left side of the street facing traffic if there are no sidewalks).
- Be aware of traffic.
- Carry an ID and your cell phone in case of emergencies.
- In the evening hours, wear reflective gear and/or carry a flashlight in front of you.

Going the Distance

Once you get started, you will want to stay motivated. Consider finding a walking friend, joining a walking club or registering for a challenging walking event. Remember that you will not notice immediate physical changes to your body, but by adding walking and a healthy diet to your daily routine, it won't be long before you look *and* feel better!

Note: Before beginning any walking program, consider discussing your exercise plans with your doctor, particularly if you have unique health issues, such as diabetes.



Start counting your steps...

Use a pedometer, which records the amount of steps that you take. Most experts recommend taking 10,000 steps a day. This may seem impossible, but little changes in daily activity such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, parking a little farther away and getting up during sedentary activities can make all the difference.



Aging has nothing to do with calendar years. A 40-year-old woman could have the heart, arteries and immune system of a 75-year-old, while a 65-year-old man who eats right and exercises might have the body of a 50-year-old. Exercise is a key factor in reducing the effect aging has on your body. Just 30 minutes of walking a day can make you healthier, more energetic and "younger."

Walking Facts:

- The U.S. Surgeon General suggests 30 minutes of daily moderate activity above and beyond normal activity levels. That's approximately 3,000 to 4,000 additional steps a day from the normal 5,000 to 6,000 we typically walk.
- Even with no change in diet, 30 minutes per day of walking (the equivalent of 10 to 12 miles per week) may prevent weight gain and even produce weight loss.
- Walking reduces your risk of heart attack by raising "good" cholesterol and lowering "bad" cholesterol levels.
- Walking reduces your risk of developing high blood pressure and other forms of heart disease.
- Regular walking reduces your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and improves your body's ability to process sugar, lowering your blood sugar levels.
- A brisk walk is a great way to reduce stress, depression and feelings of anxiety.
- People who take three 10-minute walks each day have about the same health gains as those who walk for 30 minutes straight.

So what are you waiting for? Walking is easy to do, doesn't require special equipment and shares some of the same health benefits as strenuous exercise.

