Handout 11

Tips for walking

Safety

- Talk to your health care provider before starting any new physical activity program if you have a health concern, are taking medications, or have been inactive for a while.
- Start out at a slow, easy pace for the first 5 minutes for each walking session to warm up. Slow down again for 5 minutes at the end of your walk to ‘cool down’.
- Don’t overdo it. Walk distances you feel comfortable with.
- Go at your own pace. If you are having any difficulty, slow down.
- Stop if you feel any nausea, chest pain, shortness of breath or pain in your joints. If necessary, get medical attention.
- Carry identification with you.
- Walk in places that are safe. Avoid walkways that are icy, cracked or that have poor lighting.
- During very hot or very cold weather, walk indoors where the temperature is more comfortable.
- In hot weather, avoid walking in the heat of the day. Mornings and evenings may be cooler.
- If walking alone, let a friend, family member or neighbour know where you are. Leave a map of your route on the fridge and a note to say you have gone walking.

Walking technique

- Walk at your own pace.
- If you can walk and talk easily—that’s probably a good pace. If you can walk and sing a song easily—it may be too slow. If you can’t walk and talk without gasping, you’re going too fast.
Keep your hands loose and comfortable. Avoid clenching your fists.
Walk with an ordinary stride. Avoid taking longer steps to increase your speed.

**Shoes**

- Wear a good pair of sturdy and comfortable walking shoes.
- Check with local shoe stores and your health care provider for more information about proper footwear for walking.

**Winter Clothing**

- Dress in layers for warmth and comfort. Walking can increase your body temperature no matter what the weather. A hat and scarf can help you stay warm.
- If you are going for long walks: polypropylene underwear and wool provide warmth and take sweat away from your skin. This helps to avoid getting chilled.
- Wear shoes/boots that are safe and comfortable for walking in snow.
- Buy ‘ice grippers’ for your boots.
- Ski poles and walking sticks can provide extra grip and balance.

**Summer Clothing**

- Cotton clothes that are lightweight and light coloured provide comfort and protection from heat and the sun.
- Protect yourself from the sun. Wear hats, sunglasses and sun-screen.
- Take plenty of water to drink when the weather is warm.