

# WALKING IT'S HEALTH, AN ACTIVITY FOR ALL AND ITS BENEFITS

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## INTRODUCTION

Man has been walking for millennia; this physical activity is naturally an inalienable right of every living being. It is practised "Without knowing, more or less well, more or less quickly and more or less elegantly. But whoever does not practise it becomes disabled." F. Jenevein (1982)

It is a vital activity of man, which deserves a deep study to promote it and finally meet the vital needs of man.

Therapeutically, walking, since ancient Greece, Hippocrates considered it as the best remedy for humans. It prevents some of the most known diseases nowadays, such as blood pressure, blood sugar, osteoporosis, stroke, etc.

This physical activity is an excellent antidote, it also helps keep fit, maintains joint flexibility by strengthening the bones. It also promotes the fight against stress.

However, with the evolution of societies, the technological development of means of transport, the advent of the Internet where the purchases are made at home, this activity is practiced less and less. This therefore has influenced our life habits while reducing physical effort, especially walking.

Indeed, we cannot turn back the clock, or reject all of these new technologies, how to insert this vital physical activity in our daily lives to maintain our well-being? How to properly practice walking to take advantage of its benefits?

### The benefits of walking

Some experts recommend walking at least 30 minutes a day to halve the risk of colon cancer, cardiovascular diseases, problems related to obesity ... etc.

This physical activity also fights against stress and liberate our mind from disturbances related to the professional environment, family, sound problems, etc.

Thus, it would be better, to walk without personal stereo (Walkman) to benefit by giving free rein to thought, relaxation and to think about your projects, solving your problems.

In other words, it must be ensured to drive all one's friends away and come face to oneself after working hours, loud noises of the city, etc. This, leads us to deduce that walking is not only a physiological physical activity but also anti-stress.

Therefore, this physical activity requires few resources, for a great benefit, hence its advantages. So, we do not need any special equipment or specific location, and we can even keep our everyday outfit and walk a few metres from us. The duration of the walk can vary between 10 and 30 minutes to an hour a day.

### Why walk?

This natural exercise, as Hippocrates said two thousand years ago, is indeed the best medicine for humans. One of the first problems found nowadays within societies is the overweight, where people would rather drive than walk. This decline in physical exertion generates multiple pathologies that we have briefly mentioned above.

To overcome these health problems, we should regularly practice this activity so that there is a direct and positive impact on cardiovascular and musculoskeletal (locomotor) systems.

Walking prevents the following pathological cases:

- the risk of cardiovascular diseases and cerebrovascular accident (stroke);
- drop in blood pressure (low blood pressure);
- reduction of cholesterol levels in blood;
- increase of bone density, to prevent osteoporosis;
- mitigation of the negative effects of osteoarthritis;
- relief of back pain.

### Other benefits can also be reaped from regular walking:

longevity and best quality of life;  
 improvement of fitness (aerobic capacity and cardiorespiratory function);  
 regular walking avoids risks of leg or hand fractures in case of fall;  
 regular walking avoids risks of sustaining injuries; because the joints have a better range of motion and the muscles are more flexible;  
 improvement of capability to control weight by maintaining the balance between calories taken in and those expended;

improvement of mental health, for instance, walking in a group and in pleasant places, reduces depression and anxiety, makes one's also sleep better;  
improvement of healing process for people recovering (in period of convalescence) by gradually increasing the distance of walking.

### **How to incorporate walking into our daily life?**

Today, the phrase "I have no time" has become familiar in our language, while knowing that walking brings many benefits to our body. In order to get round this time problem, simply allocate a time slot to walking and make it a habit to do so. For example, from time to time, after waking up, taking a fifteen minute walk in the morning is always beneficial. So a long walk in fresh weather is recommended, in serene and peaceful atmosphere. Regarding people using vehicles for moving are recommended to park further away, 10-15 minutes from the workplace, the distance on foot allows us to mentally prepare ourselves for our work, and, on the way back, this also allows us to plan the rest of our activities. If you take public transport, for example, always try to walk along for a while to get to a particular place.

You can practice this activity in parks, forests, town, etc., to relax and relieve stress, maintain social relationships with walkers of all ages.

### **How to walk?**

The best way to walk ... is to put one foot in front of the other by trying to naturally bring the two legs on a straight line. It is important not to walk on tiptoes, legs parallel. We walk neither into circles or in zigzag nor backwards nor by stomping nor even with feet in a V shape, that is to say,

From a mechanical point of view, the way of walking varies according to the morphology and the character of the individual. We have got the hurried (hasty) walking, the relaxed walking, the walking looking like a skip (hop) and the disjointed walking, the walking looking like a dance or a scrolling, the walking with firm and steady steps (with determination), the discrete walking, the straight walking, the indifferent, the irregular, the strict or the monotonous walking, walking with little steps and walking with long steps (stride).

However, walking into a house, a waiting room, or in an enclosed space, does not mean that one is walking, but that one is pacing.

Therefore, we find that nowadays, although multiple ways of walking exist, there are few people practicing, due to the development of

societies, which is synonymous with a modern lifestyle where one moves on foot less and less. To maintain our health capital, we need to find a time slot for physical activities, particularly for walking.

We have hiking (rambling) with an average speed of 4 to 5 kms / h, which requires neither a special technique nor a specific physical ability unless the distance to be covered is long. If we exceed the speed of 5 kms/ h, we will find ourselves in a brisk walk which is very beneficial for health. In other words, the faster we are, the more beneficial it is for our health. Beyond that, we go to the area of racewalking, that is to say, the one we practice in athletics' competitions. At that time, this activity becomes more natural walking.

### **Racewalking**

#### **Definition of Racewalking**

It is a progression of steps so taken that "the contact with the ground is maintained without interruption."

#### **Regulatory principles**

The correct racewalking meets two main requirements:

The walker (the athlete), for this purpose, has to make sure that the heel of the front foot touches down, before the back tiptoe has left the ground. He has to make sure that the advancing (the front) leg must be straightened (should not be bent at the knee) from the moment of first contact with the ground until it (the leg) passes under the body (in the vertical position) and it is obvious here, that the knee should be straight when the heel strikes the ground.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the walker (the athlete) must maintain, in a permanent and visible way, the front leg in contact with the ground, it means that it (the front leg) should not be bent between the contact and the vertical position of the body. Finally, we must note that a brisk walk performed (achieved) on tiptoes is considered as a race.

### **Conclusion**

To prevent diseases, the daily practice of walking seems very beneficial. This natural activity is within the reach of everyone; simply schedule it into your daily activities and practice it in a brisk manner and with a body's attitude which fits you. However, it is advisable to respect the basic technical principles that we have just mentioned in order to reap its benefits.

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