

Walking to a better health and longevity



GUEST
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An article in the January 2022 Journal of American Medical Association of Internal Medicine reports there are 111,000 premature deaths in the U.S. per year in the age group 40-85 that could have been prevented if the individuals had increased their physical activity level by a mere 10 minutes per day.

WALKING AS AN EASY AND LOW IMPACT EXERCISE

Increasing your daily activity level is as easy as to get up and walk to that life-saving exercise. You need no extra equipment, and you can go for a walk anytime. The health benefits of walking are endless such as increases your aerobic fitness and endurance and helps to protect you against osteoporosis by strengthening your muscles and bones.

WARMING UP AND YOUR POSTURE WHILE WALKING

While walking is an easy and low impact exercise, you should warm up and adapt a proper posture during your walk to gain the maximum health benefits and prevent injuries.

WARMING UP FOR YOUR WALK

Before your brisk walk, do gentle dynamic stretches to help loosen your muscles and lubricate the joints. Dynamic stretching involves moving in and out of a position compared to a static stretching that entails holding your position for a length of time. Listen to your body and do not over stretch. Breathe in and out as you stretch. Repeat both sides 3-5 times.

- Lower back and hamstrings stretch: Stand and hold with both hands onto a solid surface. Place your feet shoulder-width apart and gently lean forward, hinging from your waist with your back flat and your knees straight but not locked. Lean forward until you feel a stretch in your lower back and back of your thighs. Take a deep breath in and out, and then push with your hands to the upright position and reach up to the sky.

- Calf and hip stretch: Hold onto a solid surface. Lunge with one leg forward bending the front knee and keeping the back leg straight and the back foot pointing forward and heel flat on the ground. Gently lean forward until you feel the stretch in the back of



your calf and front of your hip. Then alternate by bending your back leg and straightening your front leg with your foot flexed backwards, feeling the stretch behind the front knee.

- Neck and upper back stretch: Stand feet wider than shoulder-width apart. Bending your right knee, and lunge sideways to the right. Turn your neck and upper torso to the right and stretch the left arm across your body to the right then stretching over to the left.

- Balance and glute stretch: Lean with your back against a solid surface. Lift your one knee in a bent position, put the ankle of your bent leg across the thigh of your straight leg, and bend your standing knee slightly as you push your bent knee open.

FOCUS ON YOUR POSTURE WHILE WALKING

Maintaining a proper posture while you walk is important because it opens your lungs and diaphragm. Lift your ribcage up and lengthen your whole spine up to the sky. Keep your head level by making a fist to place under your chin on your chest, relax your shoulders down. Walk actively by propelling your body forward taking long strides landing with your heel first and pushing off with the ball of your foot. Allow your arms and shoulders to swing naturally next to your body with a slight bend in your elbows. Keep your thoracic spine relaxed to assist in the arm swinging. Control your breathing by taking as many inhaling steps as exhaling steps.

LIKE STRENUOUS EXERCISES, MODERATE YOUR WALKING

If you start walking after a period of inactivity, start with a 10-minute walk on a level surface. Then build up your speed, distance, inclines, and time as your fitness level improves and your muscles get stronger.

- Quadriceps: Bend your knee behind your body pointing your knee down to the floor. Hold onto your foot and ankle until you feel a stretch in your thigh. You can modify the stretch by putting a towel around your ankle and lift the towel up behind your back.

- Hip flexor: Kneel on to one knee other leg in front of you, lean forward onto the front leg, squeezing your glutes of the back leg until you feel a stretch in front of your hip.

The simple exercise of regular walking can be the gateway to a healthier body and a longer life. If you need guidance on further stretches or experience pain, please contact your physical therapist or doctor.

*Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing contact@lizelubbept.com or visiting www.lizelubbept.com *Reference: Saint-Maurice et al "Estimated Number of Deaths Prevented Through Increased Physical Activity Among US Adults", 2022 JAMA Intern Med. pp. 349-352.*

STRETCH AFTER YOUR WALKS

To avoid stiff muscles, do static stretches to relax the muscles and calm the nervous system, hold each stretch 30-60 seconds while taking deep breaths.

- Calves: Stand with the ball of your feet on a step and drop your heels down.

- Hamstrings: Lift your one leg straight up on a few steps and gently lean forward until you feel a stretch behind your leg.



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