



get a life, get active

GO WALKING

A HANDY GUIDE TO WALKING FOR A  
HEALTHIER HEART



Ireland needs a  
Change of Heart

WALKING IS ONE OF THE EASIEST WAYS TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE! THIS LEAFLET EXPLAINS WHY WALKING IS GOOD FOR YOU. HOW MUCH YOU SHOULD AIM FOR AND HOW IT FITS INTO A BUSY DAY. WE LIST 11 USEFUL TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU GET STARTED AND KEEP YOU GOING. ON THE BACK PAGE THERE ARE ORGANISATIONS LISTED WHERE YOU CAN GET MORE INFORMATION ON THE BEST WALKS NEAR YOU.

There are many good reasons to walk. For example, walking regularly;



- gives you more energy
- makes you feel good
- makes you look better
- helps you sleep better
- increases your stamina
- helps you manage stress
- tones your muscles
- burns up calories
- improves your mobility  
at any age
- strengthens your heart
- lowers your blood pressure
- reduces your cholesterol
- protects against osteoporosis, and
- reduces the risk of developing diabetes.

## WHAT TO AIM FOR?

For health benefits, you need to be physically active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. The 30 minutes can be broken into 2 or 3 shorter sessions.

## HOW TO FIT AT LEAST 30 MINUTES OF WALKING INTO A BUSY DAY

*Whether you are doing the school run, driving to work, taking the bus or train, you can easily get your half hour's worth of walking in each day.*

- A really simple way to get started is to step outside, walk in any direction for five minutes, then walk back again. Repeat this two more times during the day and you'll have walked for half an hour.
- Go for a walk during lunch hour.
- Walk your children to school. Accompany your children in the morning and walk at a fairly fast pace once you are on your own.
- Get off the bus one or two stops before your final destination and walk the rest of the way.
- Go on foot. If you would normally drive to see a friend who lives nearby, walk instead.
- Take the long way. If your local shop is close by, extend the route to give yourself some extra walking time.
- Use the stairs. If you live in an apartment or work in an office building, forget the lift and take the stairs instead. If you have a sit down job, go find a colleague when you need to discuss something, rather than call on the phone.
- Leave the car at home and walk to the shops, bank, post-office, church or to visit a friend.





## USEFUL TIPS

- 1 Safety first** – Be safe! Be Seen! Wear reflective bands when it's dark. In isolated areas, walk with a companion, or with a dog. Tell a family member or friend where you are going and how long you plan to be.
- 2 Start slowly** – There's no need to walk five miles every morning. Just start at your own pace, increasing it gradually over a few days or weeks until you are walking at least thirty minutes most days.
- 3 Good shoes** – If your feet aren't comfortable, you won't continue walking. Use comfortable runners, or invest in a good pair of walking shoes. If you walk to and from work, to the car or bus or train, consider leaving your work shoes in the office so you can walk through town in your runners.
- 4 Supplies** – Walking will be more pleasurable if you prepare for the little mishaps that may occur. A small bag that you can simply '*grab and go*' can make all the difference. It could contain, for example, water, tissues, sunscreen, sunglasses, a few plasters and a few Euro.

**5 Be careful.** If you have health problems or concerns, consult your doctor before you start walking.

**6 Breathing** – Breathe deeply as you walk because it brings more oxygen into your body, which in turn helps to burn the calories and tone the muscles.

**7 Water** – Drink a glass of water before and after you walk.

**8 Keep a diary** – Many people like to keep a diary or log of their walking progress. You may want to get a notebook to keep track of how far or how long you walk each day.

**9 Find a friend** – Go walking with a friend. This will give you an added incentive to keep going. It will also ensure that walking is safer for you.

**10 Clothing** – Whether you're walking to the office in your work clothes, or heading out in a track suit, it's also a good idea to wear layers so that you can peel off the sweater and raincoat or put them on again as the weather dictates.

**11 Warm up** – Gradually warm up at the beginning and cool down at the end by walking at a slower pace, stretching your arms and legs.

## Diabetes

Regular physical activity in combination with a low fat diet can reduce the risk of developing diabetes. It can also help to control the development of harmful complications in those who have the condition. People who have diabetes need to plan their walks carefully, as walking uses up glucose. This means normal insulin doses may be too high. Also if you have diabetes remember to check blood sugar regularly and to carry liquid or tablet-form glucose with you.



**For further information,  
contact the Health  
Promotion Department  
of your local  
Health Board**

**North Eastern Health Board,**  
Railway Street,  
Navan, Co. Meath.  
Tel: +353 46 764 00  
Fax: + 353 46 288 18

**Western Health Board,**  
West City Centre,  
Seamus Quirke Road,  
Galway, Co. Galway.  
Tel: +353 91 548 321  
Fax: + 353 91 501 413

**North Western Health Board,**  
Saimer Court, Ballyshannon,  
Co. Donegal.  
Tel: +353 72 520 00  
Fax: + 353 72 512 87

**Southern Health Board,**  
Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital  
Western Road, Cork  
Tel: +353 21 492 1641  
Fax: + 353 21 492 155

**Mid-Western Health Board,**  
Sláinte, 57 O'Connell Street  
Limerick, Co. Limerick.  
Tel: +353 61 318 633  
Fax: + 353 61 318 637

**Midland Health Board,**  
The Mall, William Street,  
Tullamore, Co. Offaly.  
Tel: +353 506 467 30  
Fax: + 353 506 467 47

**South Eastern Health Board,**  
Dean Street, Kilkenny,  
Co. Kilkenny.  
Tel: +353 46 614 00  
Fax: + 353 46 641 122

**Northern Area Health Board,**  
Floor 3 - Park House,  
North Circular Road, Dublin 7.  
Tel: +353 1 882 3400  
Fax: + 353 1 882 3490

**East Coast Area Health Board**  
Southern Cross House,  
Southern Cross Business Park,  
Boghall Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.  
Tel: +353 1 201 4296  
Fax: + 353 1 276 5683

**South Western Area  
Health Board,**  
52 Broomhill Road,  
Tallaght, Dublin 24  
Tel: +353 1 463 2800  
Fax: + 353 1 463 2840

**Eastern Regional Health  
Authority,**  
Mill Lane,  
Palmerstown, Dublin 20  
Tel: +353 1 620 1600  
Fax: + 353 1620 1720

### **Some other useful contacts and websites**

**Slí na Sláinte**  
**Irish Heart Foundation**  
4 Clyde Road,  
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.  
Tel: +353 1 668 5001 *or*  
Web: [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

**An Óige**  
(Irish Youth Hostel Association),  
61 Mountjoy Street, Dublin 7.  
Tel: +353 1 830 4555  
Fax: + 353 1 830 5808

**National Waymarked Ways  
Advisory Committee**  
Irish Sports Council,  
21 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2.  
Tel: +353 1 2407717  
Tel: +353 1 2407777  
Email: [info@irishsportsCouncil.ie](mailto:info@irishsportsCouncil.ie)  
Web: [www.irishwaymarkedways.com](http://www.irishwaymarkedways.com)

**Irish Independent Hostels  
Association**  
57 Lr Gardiner Street, Dublin 1.  
Tel: + 353 1 836 4700  
Fax: + 353 1 836 4710  
Email: [info@hostels-Ireland.com](mailto:info@hostels-Ireland.com)  
[www.hostels-Ireland.com](http://www.hostels-Ireland.com)  
[www.sportslinks.info/walking.htm](http://www.sportslinks.info/walking.htm)

**Diabetes Federation**  
[www.diabetes.ie](http://www.diabetes.ie)



HEALTH  
PROMOTION  
UNIT



Heart Health  
Task Force