



## Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: [Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca](mailto:Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca). You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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## Keep your heart healthy by walking

February is Heart Month. You can improve your heart health simply by walking.

A form of aerobic exercise, walking is one of the easiest ways to increase your physical activity and improve your heart's health.

Physical activity increases your heart rate, strengthens the heart muscle, and increases blood circulation through your body, bringing more oxygen and nutrients to your organs. Exercise also increases your lungs' ability to take in oxygen. It lowers blood pressure and helps to reduce body fat. It also improves blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

- Have a checkup before beginning an exercise program. If you have heart problems, your doctor may want to do tests to find out how much activity your heart can safely handle.
- Start out slowly, with a warm-up in the beginning. Get faster in the middle of your walk. Then have a cool-down at the end.
- Use a phone app or buy a pedometer to count your steps every day. Set a goal to increase the number of steps you take each day or week. Many people work toward a goal of 10,000 steps a day but set a target that works for you.
- To stay motivated, walk with friends, co-workers or pets. Ask friends and co-workers to join you. Turn a walk into a brainstorming session with a co-worker. Join a walking group or club. Plan family outings around walks together.

- Set goals. Work towards doing at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous exercise a week. One way to do this is to walk 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week.
- Schedule walks on your business calendar.
- Walk whenever possible. Take opportunities such as walking to work, school, around an entire park, to do errands the grocery store, or to a restaurant.
- Set a goal to participate in an organized fitness walk.
- Walk before or after work, or on your lunch break. Instead of taking a snack or coffee break, take a walk break.
- If the weather is bad, use a treadmill. Or take comfortable shoes to the mall and walk several laps inside.
- Wear comfortable shoes and socks that cushion your feet.
- Drink plenty of water. Take a bottle with you when you walk.
- Be safe and know your surroundings. Walk in a well-lit, safe place.