Walk your way to better health

Put your pedometer to work
You may think you walk a lot during the day, but do you really? The only way to know for sure is with a pedometer – a small counting device about half the size of your cell phone that clips onto your waistband and counts each step.

Set goals
Taking 10,000 steps per day can improve your health and reduce your risk of developing an ongoing health condition. But if you’re averaging only 2,000 steps now, that’s OK. Just take it one step at a time – literally. Set weekly goals, chart your progress, and before long, those extra strides will become second nature.

Go the distance
- Instead of driving, walk to the store for that forgotten item.
- Take your dog for an extra walk each day.
- Take the stairs at work or at the mall.
- When meeting with coworkers, walk and talk instead of sitting at a desk.
- Stroll along the beach, wander through parks, or window-shop at your favorite mall.
- When running errands, park in a stall at the far end of the parking lot for a longer walk.

Just take it one step at a time – literally.

Warm up, Cool down
A proper warm up and cool down does wonders for your workout. It increases your range of motion, reduces stiffness and pain, and helps prevent injury.

WARM UP
Before you jump right in to your exercise, prepare your body with a few warm-up stretches.

SHOULDER ROLL
Roll your shoulders up, around back, and then down. Repeat 10 times. Reverse direction to roll your shoulders forward.

SIDE STRETCH
Reach up with one arm. Lean over slightly to one side, bringing your arm overhead to the side. Keep your chest open and forward. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat two times on each side.

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Cool-down stretches are just as important. Let your body relax and recover with this stretching routine.

SHOULDER STRETCH
Bend one arm and bring it across the chest, keeping your shoulder down. Gently apply pressure to the back of your upper arm, just above your elbow, using your opposite hand. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat three times on each side.

OVERALL BODY STRETCH
Stretch your arms and feet in opposite directions (arms up and feet down), reaching through your fingers and toes. Hold for 20 seconds.

DOUBLE KNEE PULL
Pull both legs into your chest, holding behind your knees. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat three times.

NECK STRETCH
Bend your head forward gently and slowly roll to each side, avoiding rolling your head back. Repeat entire stretch 10 times.

BUTTERFLY STRETCH
Bring the soles of your feet together and gently lean forward, keeping your back straight. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat three times.

Calf, quadriceps, and hamstring stretches
See warm up section. Hold stretches for 20 seconds. Repeat three times on each side.

Remember to:
- Perform each stretch slowly and gently. Do not bounce.
- Breathe. Exhale while stretching the muscle and inhale when the muscle is relaxed.
- Stretch only as far as you feel comfortable, not to the point of pain.