

20 years strong AMERICA WALKS

HEALTH BENEFITS OF WALKING

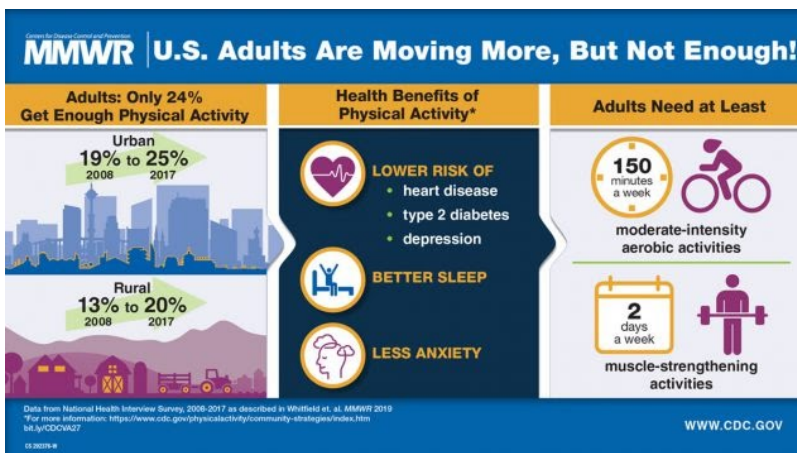


PROBLEM OVERVIEW

Less than 50% of youth and 24% of adults get enough physical activity.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that young people between 3-17 get at least 60 minutes every day and adults over 18 at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week to maintain health and decrease risk for chronic health conditions including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, cancer, overweight/obesity, arthritis, and depression¹.

Sedentary behavior has either remained stable and/or increased from 2001-2016 in the U.S. population, depending on the particular sedentary activity. Television screen time has remained high and stable, while computer use outside of work and school has increased.



Increases in walking and other modes of active travel can improve ambient air quality and reduce noise pollution if enough people shift from use of motor vehicles to active travel.

Time spent walking and moving can improve muscle strength and flexibility, cardiorespiratory fitness, joint health, bone density, sleep quality, it can also help with managing weight, stress, and mental health.

Source: CDC.gov

WHY WALKING?

Walking can literally save lives, especially for the physically inactive.

Walking has population-level health benefits and reduces rates of death from all causes.³ One study found that people who walked about 3.5 hours per week of brisk walking (depending on the person) had a 11% reduction of risk for death, with the most benefit for those who walked the least to start.

Increased walking decreases risk of cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S.⁴ There is an inverse relationship between cardiovascular disease risk and any walking and leisure walking.⁵

Brisk walking can lower blood pressure.

Studies show that walking 10,000-12,000 steps per day significantly lowers both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Consistent walking is as effective as running in lowering blood pressure.

Walking is accessible and available.⁶

Walking is free, low-skill, requires no special equipment, and is available where people are. Walking is also accessible across a lifespan, making it one of the best solutions for increasing population-level physical activity.

More people need to be engaged in even more walking.

Though self-reported walking for transportation and leisure increased between 2005-2015, the number of minutes spent walking went down.⁷

How much activity do I need?

Moderate-intensity aerobic activity

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.

at least
150
minutes
a week

AND

Muscle-strengthening activity

Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.

at least
2
days
a week



Tight on time this week? **Start with just 5 minutes.** It all adds up!

Source: CDC.gov

TOP HEALTH BENEFITS OF WALKING

1. Walking is good for your mind.⁸

Walking can help in the treatment of both anxiety and depression (especially depression). It can improve self-esteem and happiness. Walking outdoors may provide additional benefits.

2. Walking in green space can improve sleep.⁹

Regular walking in green space may improve both sleep quality and quantity, and reduce episodes of insomnia.

3. Walking can help stem the effects of arthritis.¹⁰

Even limited walking (<10 minutes/week) can help to prevent onset of physical disability due to arthritis.

4. Participating in walking groups can help improve health.¹¹

There is evidence of wide-ranging health benefits for participating in regular walking groups including improvements in blood pressure, resting heart rate, BMI, blood cholesterol, VO2 Max, and depression scores. Walking in groups increases safety and adherence to walking programs, increasing effectiveness.

ABOUT AMERICA WALKS

America Walks, a 501(c)(3) national nonprofit organization, is leading the way in advancing safe, equitable, accessible, and enjoyable places to walk and move by giving people and communities the resources to effectively advocate for change. We provide a voice for walking and walkable communities with federal agencies, provide strategy support, training and technical assistance to statewide, regional, and local organizations, and convene of the national Every Body Walk! Collaborative.

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