



Staffordshire
County Council



BEST FOOT FORWARD

Enjoy walking, reap the benefits

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1. WELCOME

Best Foot Forward is a joint initiative between Staffordshire County Council and South Staffs PCT Workplace Health. It aims to encourage staff, particularly those who take little exercise, to get more active now...and stay active through walking more.

Activity should not be confused with formal exercise. You can be active without ever slipping into lycra or joining a gym. Recently hailed as a "magic bullet" by Professor Joann Manson of Harvard Medical School, walking has been proven to deliver substantial physical and psychological benefits.

Walking is one of the best ways to get your dose of healthy activity: just 30 minutes of brisk walking, even spread throughout the day, will strengthen your heart and muscles. And your work will benefit too



You'd be surprised how a small change in the amount you walk can make a big difference to your health and well-being. So go on – make a start to-day. It's easy; you can do it anywhere, anytime and alone or with friends. It doesn't harm the environment and it's free!

This booklet has lots of useful information to help you on your way, such as daily activity logs to fill in and tips for using your Pedometer.

2. WHY WALK?

What walking will do for you

Being active on a regular basis ...will make a difference to the quality of your life. Once you start you'll soon experience the benefits;

- looking better
- better body shape and appearance
- feeling better
- more energy
- sleeping better
- helping to reduce stress and anxiety
- helping you to relax more easily
- more self-confidence
- better concentration
- meeting people and making friends
- achievement
- enjoyment



DID YOU KNOW...?

The best news is that walking burns as many calories as jogging over the same distance and, because it is a low-impact exercise, it won't stress your knees.

Better for the environment

Using the car to get around is so easy but it isn't such good news for the environment. It means we exercise a lot less, but also more land has to be given over to roads and we damage our surroundings by producing polluting exhaust fumes, congestion and noise.

Local effects of pollution include eye irritation, headaches and exacerbating breathing related illnesses. Pollution also damages plant life and even buildings.

Wider effects are climate change and thinning of the protective ozone layer.

If you walk instead of using the car for some journeys you'll lessen your impact on the local and global environment, and reduce your carbon footprint too.



Wealth benefits

You pay a lot of money for your car – so you want to get your money's worth out of it. If you add up the real costs of motoring, including vehicle duty, insurance, maintenance, parking etc it can be a very expensive way of getting around, especially for short journeys. Walking is cheaper - you'll save on high fuel bills and reduce wear and tear, and servicing costs.

And you won't need to pay for gym membership as you'll be getting all the exercise you need.

3. HOW CAN YOU WALK MORE?

Walk to work: a free workout

Build a walk into your journey to work – try different routes to add variety.

A good target in terms of time is to make the active part of your journey to work take around 15 minutes. This equates to about one mile brisk walking each way.

If you live too far away to walk all the way – and use the car or public transport – you can still get your 15 minutes of exercise. Try parking the car a little further away or get off the bus a stop earlier. Then as you get used to it you can gradually increase the distance you walk.



Walking has a marked effect on our sense of wellness. Walking wakes you up and the exercise gets your brain in gear for the day ahead. And the walk home will help you wind down.

This makes it the perfect way to journey to work.

DID YOU KNOW...?

If you spent 30 minutes walking the dog, you would use up about the same amount of calories as you would if you spent 11 minutes doing step aerobics.

Be active at work

Good reasons to be more active at work

<p>Heart Health: activity is the best investment you can make for your heart health. It can halve your risk of heart disease, angina and stroke</p>	<p>Wellbeing: activity can help to protect you from many illnesses such as diabetes, osteoporosis arthritis, Alzheimer's and some cancers</p>	<p>Concentration: even a short active break helps to re-focus the mind and improves the quality and quantity of work you do</p>
<p>Stress: staying active while you cope with life's ups and downs relaxes the mind and body, and helps to reduce the build up of tension and high blood pressure</p>	<p>Strength: you only get weaker as you age if you are inactive. Walking maintains stronger bones and suppleness, and helps improve muscle mass, tone and strength.</p>	<p>Mood: activity stimulates the 'happy hormone' noradrenaline which makes you feel good: everything seems easier and more enjoyable</p>
<p>Immunity: boost your immune system, preventing the irritating illnesses that get you down and allowing you to enjoy work and play throughout the year</p>	<p>Social life: Walking is great for meeting people and expanding your network of friends</p>	<p>Energy: activity peps you up, giving you plenty of enthusiasm for your leisure when you've finished work</p>

How can you fit walking into your daily routine?

- The first step towards being more active is the most important one!
- Avoid the lift or escalator. Walk up and down stairs – it's really good for the heart
- Avoid sitting for long periods by taking a break at least every half hour
- Rather than phoning or e-mailing a colleague deliver the message in person
- Hold a walking meeting – discuss business whilst walking
- Go for a walk at lunchtime with colleagues instead of staying in at work and improve your social life
- Plan a walk with a friend instead of meeting for lunch; keeping each other company can keep you both motivated
- Set up a walking group and encourage colleagues to join in. Arrange regular walks so that they become a habit

Be active at play

Activity doesn't have to mean exhausting runs or buying fancy equipment.

Walking gives your heart the workout it needs – the easy way! Try and fit a short walk into your daily routine.

Doing anything that increases your heart rate and gets you out of breath is just as good for you. Think about dancing, gardening or going for a bike ride.



DID YOU KNOW...?

Thirty minutes walking represents only 2% of your day.

4. YOUR EASY WALKING ACTION PLAN

How active are you now?

In the box below note how much walking you usually do each day either by time or use a pedometer to calculate your usual amount of steps.

Use this data to see where you are starting from and for measuring your improvement

	Walking - No. of minutes	Walking - No. of steps
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Weekend		
Total		

Your easy walking action plan

Start doing some regular brisk walking every day, gradually building up how much you do. It may take around 8-12 weeks to start feeling the difference. But when you do, you'll know it's worth it.



Walk at slightly above your usual pace, without it being uncomfortable. You should start to feel warmer and a little breathless, but still able to chat.

If you're not used to walking, you could start by walking for ten minutes twice a day.

Your target is to build up gradually to 30 minutes a day. Maybe two 15-minute walks or three ten-minute walks – morning, lunchtime and evening – will help you to achieve your 30 minutes

People are generally less active at weekends, so try to find time for a good walk.

Getting started – making an action plan

Making a start is the most important step you can take. Use this section to make a realistic and personal action plan.

1. **When can you walk;** Think about 3 walking activities to fit into your day

A.

B.

C.

2. **Set a date to make a start;** Straight away? In a few days? Next week?

I will start on

3. **What else do you need to do before you start?** For example;

- Do you need route information? Try a colleague, a map or the internet
- Does anyone else go your way you could walk with?
- Do you need 'sensible' shoes? Leave your heels in the office, or pop them in your backpack, and go for the sporty look.

4. **Set some personal goals or targets**

Setting a personal goal is key to success, so decide what you want to achieve. Set long-term and short-term goals, and write them below.

- Make your goals specific. Instead of saying "I want to walk more," say "I will walk for 15 minutes at lunchtime & 15 minutes in the evening."
- Be realistic. If you're not very active at the moment, don't set yourself a goal walking for an hour a day on five days a week, as that's a very big change.

Think about simple, achievable but important changes you could make.

My long-term personal goal is to

My short-term goals are to

Once you've set your goals, use the *4 week log* on page 15 to record your progress.

Counting steps to better health

A pedometer is a tool that can help motivate you to become more active by letting you see how far you walk each day.

- Press and hold both 'reset' buttons to set the counter to zero
- Remember to reset the pedometer each day
- Attach the pedometer horizontally (not tilting) to your waistband or belt on the hip, in line with the knee so the pedometer can record your steps.
- Have a practice to make sure the pedometer is working. Walk 30 steps and make sure the pedometer is counting your steps
- Get walking! Remember to clip on the pedometer when you get up and keep it on all day to record how much you walk.



**30 minutes walking
is about 3000 steps**

Walk this way

Yes, yes, we know you've been doing it since you were a toddler, but getting your walking technique right will help you make the most of this easy exercise:

- Check your posture – keep your neck and spine straight and your shoulders back and down, but relaxed.
- Think about pulling your stomach in and lifting your pelvis.
- Your heel should hit the ground first, then roll through to your toe.
- Walk to your natural stride – it's easier on the joints and will give you a better work out.
- Gently swing your arms to help propel you along.

Walk safe

- Cross the roads carefully – it's easy to be distracted if you're on the phone or listening to music
- Keep the volume down – you need to be able to hear what's going on around you
- Keep water with you – you can get dehydrated easily, and not just on the rare hot days
- Make sure you are seen - when you're on narrow pavements or if you have to step onto the road walk towards oncoming traffic so drivers can see you
- Be bright – in winter or gloomy weather wear something bright so you'll be noticed
- Plan your route – if you're heading home after dark make sure you know where you're going before you set off



DID YOU KNOW...?

A stroll to the car doesn't count as moderate exercise. To make sure you reap all the health benefits of walking, you'll need to go at a decent pace – walk about the pace you'd walk if you were late for an appointment.

How are you doing so far?

After a few weeks, you may have had some successes as well as some difficulties. Ask yourself "How am I doing so far?" Why not revisit your personal goals and targets. If you have achieved them, well done – now's the time to set some new targets.

If not, ask yourself why, then look at what you can do to get back on track.

Here are some common problems with solutions you can try:

After a holiday or illness	Take it easy when you begin again, starting with small amounts of walking and building up.
Made a start but not walking every day?	Try and think of some ways that walking can become a routine part of your life. See page 9.
It all seems like too much effort	Are you trying to do too much? Set some new short-term goals and reward yourself when you achieve them.
Family and home responsibilities are getting in the way	Plan how to deal with your other commitments but also plan how to fit walking around them.
You find it's no fun doing things by yourself	Invite a friend or colleague to join you so you can support each other.
Long spells of bad weather make walking unpleasant	Invest some of the savings you've made from using the car less and buy some decent outdoor gear.

Hitting the target

Name _____ section _____

contact no. or email _____

Here's your four week log. When completed please send a copy to;

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Steps	1							
	2							
	3							
	4							

How did you incorporate more walking into your life?

What was your best moment?

What was your worst moment?

Use the chart below to convert your steps to distance, calories burned, carbon emissions saved.

Steps	500	1000	2500	5000	10000
miles	0.25	0.5	1.25	2.5	5
Km	0.4	0.8	2	4	8
calories	20	41	102	204	408
carbon	0.07	0.14	0.35	0.75	1.4

4 week totals	
steps	
distance	
calories	
carbon saved	

Keep it going

Welcome to a healthier heart and a more energetic you! Here are some blank tables to photocopy to continue your new regime.

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Steps	1							
	2							
	3							
	4							

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Steps	1							
	2							
	3							
	4							

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Steps	1							
	2							
	3							
	4							

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Steps	1							
	2							
	3							
	4							

5. MORE INFORMATION

www.walkingworks.org.uk

www.livingstreets.org.uk

www.walkit.com

www.bhf.org.uk British heart foundation

www.whi.org.uk Walking the way to Health initiative

www.feetforlife.org

www.walkengland.org.uk

www.ramblers.org.uk

www.walkingworld.com British walks each with clear guide and OS map

www.walkinginstaffs.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/health

Two web-sites for buggy and wheelchair users;

www.walkswithbuggies.com

www.walkswithwheelchairs.com

Also try your local council and Tourist Information offices for local walks.

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think? Or give us some useful ideas. Contact us at Staffordshire County Council on smarter.choices@staffordshire.gov.uk or ring 01785 276615

Please keep in touch and let us know how you are doing. We'd love a photo and a short paragraph on your progress, as well as a copy of your 4 week 'hitting the target' sheet on page. 14.

Post to;
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