When Robert Sweetgall left his job as a chemical engineer, he knew he was staring death in the face. Three of his close family members had died at an early age of heart disease. His all-grease, all-cholesterol diet wasn’t doing him any favors. His sedentary lifestyle spent sitting at work, at home, and in the car, only made matters worse. That’s when he decided to make a big change. He put on a fanny pack, walked out the door, and crossed the United States on foot seven times. That was about 30 years ago. Today, Sweetgall is still walking and encouraging others to keep moving to lose weight, reduce stress, and live longer. “Just do something to make physical activity part of your life,” says Sweetgall. “Then take it one step at a time.”

If you’re already healthy and active, keep on exercising. If you need a little motivation to move more, get up and go for a walk. It’s all about making the effort, beginning with where you are. Take the month-long challenge to Walk 30 to 60 Minutes a Day.

Are You Getting Enough Exercise?

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise five days a week. Walking at a brisk pace is a good form of this type of exercise. Unfortunately, an estimated 80 percent of all adults get less than 30 minutes of exercise a day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And many people don’t exercise at all. Fortunately, walking is good for your health at any age, and it’s never too late to start.

How Walking Helps

Exercise is a key component to living a long and healthy life. It reduces the risk of dying of heart disease and decreases the risk for certain cancers, diabetes, and high blood pressure. It can also be your solution for feeling tired, bored, or out of shape. And one of the simplest forms of exercise is walking.

Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read “Walk 30 to 60 Minutes a Day.”
2. To complete the challenge, walk 30 to 60 minutes a day on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.

CHALLENGE
Make time to exercise daily

How much do you know about walking and your health? Take this quiz to find out.

T  F
1. □ □ Walking is an effective form of exercise that reduces the risk for many chronic diseases.
2. □ □ Walking at a brisk pace means you can still carry on a conversation without being out of breath.
3. □ □ Short walks throughout the day are just as effective as a one-hour walk.
4. □ □ Walking briskly for 30 to 60 minutes a day can reduce your risk for a heart attack by 40 percent.
5. □ □ If you walked one mile a day, you could lose 10 pounds in a year.
6. □ □ Most people take less than 4,000 steps a day, but the ideal is 10,000 steps a day for best health.

If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you may benefit from learning more about walking to improve your health. Studies show that moderate intensity exercise, like brisk walking, can improve your health, lower your risk for chronic disease, aid in weight management, and improve your mood.

Regular physical activity can help you:

✔ Build muscle strength and strong bones.
✔ Feel more energetic and improve your mood.
✔ Develop aerobic and cardiovascular fitness.
✔ Lose weight and control your appetite.
✔ Sleep better and reduce stress.
✔ Lower your risk of diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.
✔ Lower your blood pressure.
✔ Improve your blood cholesterol levels.
✔ Decrease the risk for colon, breast, and other cancers.
✔ Delay the effects of aging and live longer.

Fit Walking Into Your Life

Walking is a great form of exercise. You don’t need to join an expensive gym or commit to a rigorous exercise or training routine. Just lace up your shoes and go. Aiming to walk 30 to 60 minutes a day is a good goal to have. At 60 minutes, that’s about 10,000 steps a day. One recent study of middle-aged women found that taking at least 10,000 steps a day helped control weight and lowered the risk for diabetes and high blood pressure. So how far is 10,000 steps? It’s about five miles.

If you spend a lot of your time sitting at your desk, in the car, or at home, you’re not alone. Walking five miles a day might sound like a lot. But it’s probably easier than you think. If you don’t have one big chunk of time to walk 30 to 60 minutes at once, taking shorter 10-minute walking breaks throughout the day can be just as effective. You can fit walking into your life. Here’s how:

☐ Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
☐ Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning and go for a short walk.
☐ Walk to the bus or train stop.
☐ Walk to each end of the mall when you go shopping.
☐ Park your car a few blocks away from the store or on the outer edge of the parking lot.
☐ Schedule a “walking” work meeting at the office.
☐ Walk around the block during your lunchtime or break.
☐ Take a walk after work.
☐ Walk 15 minutes after dinner to settle your meal.
☐ Take your dog for a walk.
☐ Walk the perimeter of the grocery store once before you begin shopping.

Track Your Progress

A pedometer used to be the primary way people tracked how far they walked in a day. Now digital mapping tools, tracking devices, and mobile technology make it easy to keep track of how much you walk in a day. Whether you use an old-school pedometer, digital tracking device, or some other method, it’s important to track your progress.

Keeping a daily log of the time you spend walking will help you be more likely to fit walking into your schedule. And as the days and weeks go by, your daily walking log can serve as a source of motivation to help you keep going. Once you see how easy it is to make walking a part of your life, you’ll be ready to set bigger goals to walk more and improve your health.

Wear the right shoe

The only special equipment you really need to start walking is a good pair of shoes. Any shoes that are comfortable, provide support, and don’t cause blisters will do. But you may want to invest in shoes specifically for walking or running with added cushioning and support. For more information about choosing a good shoe for walking, go to tinyurl.com/oj7rw8l

Sources: Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.; American College of Sports Medicine.; American Heart Association.; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.
Walk 30 to 60 Minutes a Day

Instructions
1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you walk 30 to 60 minutes.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you made to make walking 30 to 60 minutes a day become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you walked 30 to 60 minutes daily to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:

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HC = Health Challenge™  ex. min. = exercise minutes

Weight & weekly summary

________ Number of days this month I walked 30 to 60 minutes

________ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of other physical activity

Other wellness projects completed this month:

________________________________________________________

Signature ___________________________ Date ________________