

Paycare

Everyday Health Cover since 1874



# The Hidden Benefits of Walking

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WHY WALKING IS GOOD FOR YOU, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

## The Hidden Benefits of Walking

# THE WONDERS OF A GOOD WALK!

We all know that exercise is good for our health, but to keep our bodies (and minds) in tip top condition, we don't need to be fully-trained Olympian athletes or indeed world champion long-distance runners. In fact, the simple act of walking – whether a swift stride to the shops, a leisurely stroll through the park, or a brisk power-walk round the block – can have a huge impact on both our mental and physical wellbeing. Fantastic news!

There are of course the obvious benefits – such as helping us lose weight, improving circulation, and boosting vitamin D. But there are also those not-so-obvious ones, and we've put together a list of just a few of these for you. Did you know that walking...?

Studies<sup>1</sup> have shown that a **brisk walk** can be just as effective in mild and moderate cases of depression as **antidepressants**



### Makes Us Happy

One of the major benefits of walking is stress relief as the act of **physical exercise increases concentrations of norepinephrine in the body** – a chemical which moderates the brain's response to stress. Studies<sup>1</sup> have shown that a brisk walk can be just as effective in mild and moderate cases of depression as antidepressants – with only positive side-effects.



### Increases Productivity

Employees **who regularly exercise are said to be far more productive** and have much more energy than their more sedentary counterparts. Not only that, but 12noon is apparently the **optimum time of the day to reap the benefits** so, if you fancy surviving the midday slump, be sure to take that lunchtime stroll. Some organisations even run dedicated walking clubs at break times – great for relieving those work tensions, enhancing relationships with colleagues, and boosting afternoon outputs.



### Prevents Dementia

Walking, like all forms of physical exercise, **boosts the chemicals in the brain** that support and prevent degradation of the hippocampus – a vital part of the brain for memory and learning. Researchers<sup>2</sup> have found that **walking for just 20 minutes a day boosts memory** and improves overall brain function.

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### Encourages Creativity

It's widely reported that the late (and hugely successful) founder of Apple, **Steve Jobs, regularly held meetings on the move**. And, research by Stanford University supports his thinking by demonstrating that walking significantly boosts creative inspiration. Friedrich Nietzsche even said all those years ago that **'all truly great thoughts are conceived by walking'** – so if you want to get those creative juices well and truly flowing, get up on your feet!



### Is Kind on Your Pocket

Walking is of course one of the **most accessible forms of exercise**, with no need for expensive membership fees, fancy equipment, or the latest Lycra number! In fact, **all you need is yourself**, a pair of shoes, and some good old motivation to get outdoors (or indeed indoors!).



### Strengthens Friendships

By asking friends, family members or colleagues to join you, you can **make a simple walk into a full-on social occasion**. Whether that's catching up on the latest gossip, being an open ear for a mate in need, or putting the world to rights – forge those bonds whilst improving your health!



### Boosts the Economy

A report supported by the Walking for Health initiative found that **physical inactivity costs the UK economy up to £10billion a year** through sick days, healthcare costs, and early deaths – so do it for your country and get your walking shoes on!

And finally, in the words of American poet and essayist, Gary Snyder...

**"Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind. Walking is the exact balance between spirit and humility."** We couldn't have put it better ourselves!

<sup>1</sup> Harvard Medical School

<sup>2</sup> Journal of Alzheimer's disease

<sup>3</sup> Cambridge University



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**How do you make sure you're active at work?**

We'd love to hear your ideas, so please do get in touch on 01902 371000 or email [enquiries@paycare.org](mailto:enquiries@paycare.org).



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