

Week 1: Starting out

+ Welcome to our 12-Week Walking Plan. Use these tables to record and monitor your progress, marking off your achievements each day. During the work-out phase, aim for 50% of your maximum heart rate. Or simply follow a brisk pace where you are pushing yourself – you should feel the exertion but still be able to talk. If you have a pedometer, keep a tally of your steps.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.5):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 10 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 10 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Wednesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 10 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Thursday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 10 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 10 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Self check Start slowly and build up gradually if you haven't exercised recently. Stop the plan immediately if you feel uncomfortable or unwell in any way: you should get yourself thoroughly checked out by a doctor before you continue.

Week 2: Picking up the pace

+ This week, we're upping the ante by increasing the work-out portion of your daily walk by five minutes. In total, you should now be walking 25 minutes a day; 15 minutes of it at a pace where your heart is working at 50% of its maximum rate. But don't forget: it's important always to allow two rest days per week to give your muscles time to recover.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.5):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 15 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 15 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Thursday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 15 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 15 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact A recent University of Michigan study found that moderately to vigorously active people in their 50s and 60s were 38% less likely to die in the following eight years than those who were sedentary.

Week 3: Digging deeper

+ We're again increasing the work-out portion of your daily walk – by a further five minutes. (No-one said this was going to be easy!) The intensity of your walking stays the same. You should be able to comfortably walk 30 minutes a day, including 20 minutes with your heart rate at 50% of its maximum figure.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.5):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Wednesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Thursday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact Walking can help relieve some of the symptoms of osteoarthritis. Research suggests that people with arthritis of the knee who exercise in moderation have less pain and disability than those who choose not to exercise.

Week 4: Turning up the pressure

✦ This week, the length of your walks will stay the same: 30 minutes. But we're asking you to focus on increasing the intensity. This means that during the work-out stage of your walk, you will need to pick up the pace marginally. If you're counting, aim to get your heart rate at 60% of MHR.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.6):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

✦ **Health fact** A 2006 Group Health Cooperative and University of Washington study of 1740 people found that those who exercised three or more times a week had a 30-40% lower risk of developing dementia.

Week 5: Finding your rhythm

✦ It's time to consolidate. This week, your total walking time is unchanged at 30 minutes a day, and the intensity of your walks also stays at 60% of your maximum heart rate. This will give you a chance to settle into a rhythm and really focus on your walking technique.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.6):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

✦ **Health fact** A recent European study found that people who walk for 30 minutes, five times a week, live one-and-a-half years longer than those who are less active.

Week 6: The halfway mark

+ You're now almost halfway through our 12-Week Walking Plan. Congratulations! You should feel your fitness improving and your energy increasing. This week, your programme remains unchanged: continue walking for 30 minutes a day, doing 20 minutes with your heart rate at 60% of maximum.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.6):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 20 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact The Harvard School of Public Health has found that an hour of moderate activity throughout the day can cut the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by half.

Week 7: More pain – but more gain

+ This week, it's time to step up to the mark again and increase the work-out section of your walks by another five minutes. In total, you should now be walking 35 minutes a day in total, 25 minutes of it at a pace that is rapid enough to ensure you are working your heart at 60% of MHR.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.6):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Wednesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Thursday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact Health researchers have found that lean, sedentary men have higher death rates than men who are overweight but who regularly exercise and are considered fit.

Week 8: Going for broke

+ You should be used to challenges by now – so we've got another one for you. This week, the overall duration of your walk will remain at 35 minutes, but you'll need to find an extra spring in your step during the work-out section (10% to be precise). You should now be recording a heart rate of 70% in this phase.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.7):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 25 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact A recent study has shown that by doing just two to three hours of recreational exercise a week, you can lower your risk of developing gallstones by 20%.

Week 9: Reaping the rewards

+ This week you'll need to increase your walks by a further 5 minutes each day. You're now two-thirds of the way through our 12-Week Walking Plan and should be able to walk comfortably for 40 minutes day, 30 minutes at a pace that gets your heart beating at 70% of MHR. It sounds impressive, doesn't it? It is.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.7):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
|--|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 30 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Tuesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 30 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| Wednesday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 30 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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| Friday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 30 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
| This week I've achieved | Total minutes: | Total distance/steps: | | |

My recovery heart rate at the end of this week is:

My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

+ Health fact According to a University of Southern California study, women who exercise for at least four hours a week throughout their life are half as likely to develop breast cancer as those women who don't exercise at all.

Week 10: Rounding the bend

✦ OK, the finish line is almost in sight, but the race isn't over yet. This week we need you to clock up an extra five minutes a day during your walks, taking your total walking time to 45 minutes. The intensity of your walking in the work-out phase should get your heart rate to 70% of its maximum capacity.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

My work-out target heart rate should be (MHR x 0.7):

| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
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| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 35 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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✦ **Health fact** A US study from Stanford University has found that people who walk or do low-impact aerobics for 40 minutes, four times a week, fall asleep twice as fast at night, then sleep an hour longer.

Week 11: Feeling the burn

✦ You need to really dig deep this week. While you can continue walking for the set time of 45 minutes, you need to take on an extra challenge: include 5 minutes of stair walking or hilly terrain twice a week during your work-out. And do it at a pace where your heart rate is 70% of MHR.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

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| Day | Date | Minutes completed | Distance/ steps | Notes |
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| Monday Warm-up 5 minutes slow walking Work-out 35 minutes walking at brisk pace Cool-down 5 minutes slow walking | | | | |
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✦ **Health fact** A Harvard study found that men who used the stairs to climb 20-35 floors each week had a 29% lower risk of stroke than men who climbed fewer than ten.

Week 12: The home stretch

✦ Take a bow. You've made it to the final week of our 12-Week Walking Plan. For three days this week, you're still walking 35 minutes a day at a pace where your heart rate is 70% of its maximum capacity. For the other two days, your work-out comprises 30 minutes' walking plus 10 minutes of stair walking. We know you can do it.

My maximum heart rate (MHR) is (220 minus my age):

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My level of fitness at the end of this week is:

✦ **Health fact** Research from the Appalachian State University has found that women who walk briskly for 45 minutes, five days a week, can reduce their sick days by half because their immune systems are stronger.