WALK YOURSELF FITTER!

BY PATRICK DALE
This e-book has been specially created for CSX customers who have purchased a CSX 3D Multi Function Pedometer.

We would like to help all of our customers get active, fit and healthy and the book is designed especially for you to help you get the most from walking and your pedometer. The book is suitable for all fitness levels.

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Safety – Please Read Before Exercising

IMPORTANT – Before starting any form of exercise program, consult your doctor or therapist. If at any time during your exercise you experience discomfort or pain, stop the exercise immediately and consult your doctor.

Always Warm up – Cool down and stretch before and after exercising. This will help prevent straining muscles.
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1) Introduction

Exercise can often seem like a very complex subject. Go to a gym or pick up a fitness magazine and, chances are, you’ll be all but bamboozled by the huge array of fitness equipment and training methods that are available for you to use. Ironically, this huge choice can lead to something fitness professionals like me call “paralysis by analysis”. In other words, many exercisers simply end up so overwhelmed by the variety of exercise options available that they are unable to actually choose one to use!

Fitness is an industry and as such has to make money and money is made by inventing (and often reinventing) exercise methods and then promoting them as being “the best”. With so many forms of exercise vying for the top spot, and your hard-earned money, it’s no wonder that consumers are often unsure as to what type of exercise is really the best.

In many cases, the most hyped exercise methods are not the best but are often merely fads that will soon disappear when exercisers realise just how ineffectual they actually are. The same is true of food. The least healthy foods are usually hyped the most vigorously whereas healthy foods are seldom promoted. When was the last time you saw an advert for apples? How about fast-food burgers? See what I mean?!

In keeping with this theory, one of the most effective forms of exercise is also one of the simplest, cheapest and least discussed; walking. Walking is a powerful fitness tool and yet, probably because it can’t really be turned into a heavily marketed money making fitness product, is often overshadowed by more “sexy” forms of exercise or even dismissed entirely.

If more people walked, I strongly believe that the world would be a healthier, slimmer and happier place. Walking has been relegated to an inconvenience when, in actuality, it should be something we do lots of simply as a matter of course.

Not so many years ago, most families only had one car, the kids walked to school, the lack of supermarkets meant that shopping involved walking and carrying groceries and, if you wanted to go somewhere relatively local, you walked to get there.

Fast forward to today and many households have two or more cars, kids are ferried to and from school, people park their cars as close as possible to their destination to avoid walking any further than necessary and, generally, walking is something that very few of us does much of. It’s almost as if walking has fallen out of fashion.

Interestingly, obesity levels have risen as average daily walking distances have declined. Coincidence? I don’t think so.

Walking is arguably the best form of exercise but because it is not hyped or is perceived (incorrectly) as easy or boring it is usually dismissed when, in fact, it could very well be the answer to all your fitness prayers. Simple, accessible, fun and effective, walking has a lot to offer but asks for very little in return. No fancy equipment is required, there is no need for expensive instruction, no special facilities are necessary; all you have to do is get up, get out and put one foot in front of the other!
Of course, if you are walking for exercise, fitness and weight control, there are several things you can and should consider to ensure you get the most from your walking but that’s what this e-book is all about. My aim is to help you start and then maintain a regular walking program so that you can enjoy the benefits of this unsung exercise hero. Don’t worry – I’m not going to try and sell you anything or baffle you with science! I simply want you to come to love walking as much as I do. Despite coming from a hardcore sports and fitness background, I still rate walking as one of my favourite forms of exercise. I’m a lifelong walker and, having experienced the benefits of walking firsthand, want you to become one too!

So, and without further ado, lace up your walking shoes and let’s get going!

Author practicing what he preaches
2) Why Walk?

*“Those who think they have not time for bodily exercise will sooner or later have to find time for illness.”* Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby (1826-93), *The Conduct of Life address at Liverpool College, 20th December 1873.*

Most of us know we need to exercise on a regular basis but a relatively small percentage of us actually do enough physically demanding activity to benefit our health. The problem is that, for many of us, time and energy are such valuable commodities that very few of us can fit exercise into our already busy schedules.

You see, the common (mis)conception is that you need to exercise for about an hour at a time and around five-hours a week for a workout to be beneficial and those five-hours had better be intense or you are all but wasting your time. Then you also need to factor in travelling time to and from the gym and also your gym fees as well as the cost of your workout clothes. Before you know it, your fitness endeavours have cost you close to ten-hours a week and a whole lot of cash too!

Unsurprisingly, many people soon realise that this level of exercise and financial commitment is unsustainable and either don’t even bother to start exercising or give up within a few short weeks.

The thing is, while five intense one-hour workouts per week might be optimal for maximizing your fitness, many of us don’t actually need to exercise that hard or for that long. In fact, most of us would see great benefit from simply being more active. And what better, simpler, more convenient way to inject some activity into your day than by enjoying a walk?

Many studies have been conducted which clearly illustrate just how healthy and beneficial walking can be. Here are a few selected highlights...

Walking at a moderate pace – 3 to 4 miles per hour for up to 3 hours a week or 30 minutes a day – can cut the risk of heart disease in women as much as 40-percent, a 1999 Harvard study showed. The benefits to men are statistically comparable. The benefits are the same as would be obtained from aerobics, jogging or other types of more vigorous exercise.

Retired men who walked less than one mile per day had mortality rates twice that of men who walked more than two-miles per day, according to a 1998 study in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Walking 30-minutes a day will reduce your risk of dying of heart disease, even if you are unsuccessful in losing weight, reducing your high blood pressure or reducing levels of cholesterol, according to studies published in 2005 in Diabetes Care.

Activity, or lack of it, was the biggest predictor of heart disease, according to a 2004 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association. People who walked regularly lived longer than their non-walking peers.

An analysis of numerous studies on walking and heart disease concluded that the risk for developing heart disease decreases as the amount of walking increases. The 1999 analysis concluded that walking should be prescribed as an evidence-based, effective exercise therapy for heart disease prevention in the general population.
According to several Harvard Medical studies, regular walkers – 20 to 40-minutes per day, five or more days per week – have a lower BMI and healthier hip to waist ratio measurement than their non-walking counterparts even if the non-walkers were regular gym attendees.

Walking is a significant indicator of health. People who walk a lot are generally healthier than those who do not. After the age of 65, how fast you walk may predict how long you have left to live.

Walking, or gait, has long been recognized as a proxy for overall health and has been measured in many studies. Researchers have found a remarkably consistent association between faster walking speed and longer life.

Phew! It’s abundantly clear then that walking is a very beneficial form of exercise but why is walking as good or even better than jogging, swimming or hitting the gym? Good question! Let’s take a look...

- Walking is natural and requires no special skills, equipment or facilities. You can walk virtually anywhere and anytime.

- You can easily make walking part of your daily routine by walking to or from work or school, walking during your lunch break or swapping 30-minutes of TV viewing for a brisk walk around your local area. Walking can slot seamlessly into your daily routine.

- Walking is low risk – injuries from walking are very rare, especially when compared to running.

- Walking can be sociable – you can walk with a friend or family member and improve your social fitness along with your physical fitness. Walking with your spouse can strengthen your relationship and walking with your kids is a great way to teach them the value of healthy exercise.

- You can tailor walking to meet your fitness levels. Not very fit? Walk at a moderate speed for 10-minutes. High level of fitness? Walk faster, uphill, wear a back pack or go further.

- Walking is a great way to explore new places or see old places from a different perspective. The world rushes by when you are in a car but, when you walk, you’ll see things that you didn’t even know were there.

Wear a back pack for a more demanding walking experience
Walking can help unlock your mind and enhances numerous aspects of mental function. Many great thinkers have found walking to be very beneficial for improving creativity including the composers Elgar, Holst, Delius, Vaughan Williams and Charles Dickens found inspiration for his novels during his daily walks through London. Many of my own writing ideas are formulated during my twice-daily walks!

I am an ardent walker – a card carrying member of the club you could say. As a boy, I walked two-miles to and from school every day and if I needed to get somewhere in my neighbourhood, I walked there. Later, as a teenager, I hiked quite a lot and explored many parts of England and Europe with my backpack and walking boots. Walking became part of my profession when I joined the Royal Marines and now, as a dog owner (four dogs actually!), twice a day walks are just something that happen come rain or shine.

A few years ago, I wrote about my walking experiences in ultra-FIT magazine...

About six months ago I got a dog. I realise that this is not a normal start to a fitness related article but bear with me...

I’ve always enjoyed walking. As a kid I had to walk to school, a round trip of about four miles. I also had a newspaper delivery round and completed numerous hikes with the Scouts. My main mode of transport up to the age of 18 was, as my Gran called walking, Shank’s pony. If I wanted to go anywhere, I had to walk. As a young adult I did my fair share of backpacking which I also enjoyed immensely. Fast forward a couple of years and I was getting paid to hike - well sort of! As a Royal Marine Commando, I frequently covered long distances on foot while carrying everything I needed on my back. This was called yomping and was one of my favourite parts of “Bootneck” life. With nothing more than a rucksack, I learnt to live outdoors for weeks on end...how much simpler life was then!

Once I left the Marines and became a civvie again, I walked less and less. Like many of you, my walking was reduced to traipsing from the car park to the gym or pushing a shopping trolley around the supermarket. Where I once wore out walking boots in a matter of months, I was now able to make a pair of boots last five years or more! I actually fell into the trap of looking for ways to walk less...parking as close as I could to my destination, not walking for pleasure and simply not making the effort to get out on my own two feet.

Then along came Bella, or Bella Wooferton to give her full name. Bella is a Great Dane that was abandoned in a nearby town. I adopted her and suddenly life changed. Now, my day starts and ends with a 45 to 60 minute walk and maybe a 15 to 30 minute walk at midday. We walk an average of 4 miles an hour so I estimate I walk about 30 miles a week, irrespective of the weather. Needless to say, at first this was a bit of a shock to the system but I soon realised that there were numerous benefits to regular walking that I had all but forgotten. These include:

- **Increased calorie output** – not a lot but enough that I am a little leaner than I was six months ago without having made any dietary changes. I have also reduced the amount of gym-based cardio I do and now have more time to focus on strength training – my preferred form of training

- **My joints ache less** – my twice-daily walks are keeping my knees and hips more mobile – it’s like I get two warm ups a day
• I am more creative – I have some great ideas when I’m out walking and many of my recent article and book ideas have come to me when I’ve been out on the hills

• I get to unplug from technology – no phone, no internet, no distractions! I’m off the grid for an hour or two a day and that helps reduce stress

• My posture is much improved – I spend a lot of my day sat in front of a PC writing and my regular walks have helped offset the time I spend stooped over my keyboard. My lower back is much less stiff – something I have really noticed when squatting and deadlifting

• I have more energy – maybe it’s the reduction in cardio or it might be the increased oxygenated blood flow to my brain but I’m certainly more energetic after a walk

• I recover better from workouts – even though I am training just as hard if not harder than ever, I’m suffering less DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness). I put this down to increased blood flow and moving about more on a regular basis. My muscles don’t get chance to stiffen up

All in all, walking a couple of times a day had added a lot to my physical and mental wellbeing. Of course, some mornings I would rather stay in bed and sometimes it’s a bit of a rush to walk Bella, eat breakfast, get to the gym, train, and then be ready for my first appointment of the day but the payoff is well worth the investment.

I don’t expect you all to rush out and get a dog after reading this, although if you do I highly recommend Great Danes, but I’d like you to try and make a conscious effort to walk more. Don’t think of it as exercise but as medicine; big medicine! Did you know that our hunter-gatherer ancestors walked an average of 15 miles a day? And populations that walk a lot suffer less insidious diseases such as CHD, hypertension and diabetes. We are built to walk far and often and, I believe, regular walking can be life enhancing.

So here is my challenge to you: walk for 30-minutes every day for the next 30-days. I’m betting you’ll feel and maybe even look better one month from now. You may have to get up 30-minutes earlier or watch 30 minutes less TV at night but that is a small investment.

One caveat to my challenge – do not hop on a treadmill and do your walking indoors. This challenge is not about doing more “hamster” cardio. Get out and experience your local area. Enjoy the sights and sounds and explore. Walking is like meditation on the move and it could be just what your fitness routine is missing.

It bears repeating; walking is “big medicine” and as such should be a regular part of your day. Not just at weekends or rare sunny bank holidays but every single day. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that you should try and clock up around 150-minutes of exercise per week and while this may sound like a lot, it is actually only 21.5-minutes a day! Walking every day is life enhancing and you’ll experience some pretty remarkable benefits from your measly investment of time and effort.
3) Getting Started

By now, you should hopefully be as sold on walking for fitness as I am and may well be chomping at the bit to get out and get started. However, and as the saying goes, fools rush in where angels fear to tread, so I want you to take a breath, count to ten and hold off striding out into the great blue yonder just yet!

Enthusiasm is admirable but doing too much too soon has been the cause of many fitness casualties. Walking is going to become part of your life so there is no need to go rushing off without making sure you are properly prepared. Curbing your enthusiasm and starting slowly means that you are much more likely to become a habitual exerciser and avoid falling off the exercise wagon in the near future.

Walking is a natural activity but, that being said, following a few simple guidelines can make the difference between seamlessly slotting this vital activity into your day and finding yourself miles from home and cursing my name!

The 10-commandments of happy walking

1. Comfortable, supportive, shock absorbing shoes are a must. You don’t have to go the whole hog and wear walking boots but normal street shoes might not be ideal either. A middle of the range pair of training shoes would be fine but if you get serious about your daily walk then by all means buy a dedicated pair of specialist walking shoes or boots.

2. Make sure your socks have no thick seams that will rub and give you blisters. Blisters can make even the toughest Marine cry – and I should know!

3. Wear clothes that are easily vented as you may warm up quite a bit when walking. I was always told to start cold and finish warm because if you are warm enough before you start walking; chances are you will get overheated later on. Wear layers so you can control your body temperature more easily.

4. If you are going to walk in the vicinity of traffic, especially at night, wear something bright and consider carrying a torch to light your way. If you can, stick to well-lit pathways and keep your exploring to when the sun is up.

Walking boots; optional – not essential
5. Stride out and walk with purpose but don’t feel you have to turn your walk into a strenuous workout. Swing your arms, extend your legs through your hips but remain comfortable at all times. Keep your head up, your neck long and your shoulders relaxed – avoid hunching and tensing up. Don’t clench your fists but, instead, keep your hands open and relaxed.

6. Increase your distance gradually. The 30 day/30 minute challenge mentioned in the previous chapter is within almost every exerciser’s reach but that doesn’t mean you have to dive in headfirst to that exact level of exertion. Start off with a very conservative duration, e.g. five minutes, and add a minute or so every walk you do. By the end of the month you’ll be walking for 30 minutes or more per session but, having built up to it gradually, it won’t be too big a shock to your system. Remember, it’s better to finish a walk knowing you could have gone further than to finish a walk wishing you’d stopped sooner!

7. If you have any balance issues, consider using a walking stick or sticks for balance and keep off the rough stuff and stay on smooth, even surfaces. Do not increase your risk of suffering a fall by doing your walking on overly rough terrain.

8. By all means carry a mobile phone for safety but avoid using it while you are walking and definitely do not text as you walk because such a distraction could easily lead to injury. I once mistakenly walked into the ladies loo at an airport while texting so be warned! Use your walk as an opportunity for quality time away from the stresses and demands of the technologically-swamped modern world.

9. Don’t feel you are limited to walking once a day; your walking can be cumulative throughout the day. Using your pedometer, see how many steps you cover in a 30-minute walk and then simply make sure you accumulate around this number of steps every day. For example, walk for 10-minutes in the morning, 10-minutes at lunch time, five-minutes in the late afternoon and five-minutes in the evening. Clock up the miles and you’ll clock up the benefits.

10. Look for additional walking opportunities. Take the stairs and not the lift, get off the bus a couple of stops earlier, use out-of-town car parks instead of the (more expensive) city centre ones, walk to the local shops instead of driving, walk your kids to school…all of these additional walks are “miles in the bank.”
4) Warming Up and Cooling Down

Warming up is an important part of safe and effective exercise. While you could dive straight into your walk without warming up beforehand, you’ll feel much more comfortable if you spend a few minutes preparing your body and mind before you head out. You don’t need an especially lengthy or extensive warm up— you are only going for a walk after all, but spending a few minutes readying your body for what is to come is a good idea, especially if you have been mostly sedentary. Likewise, after your walk, you will recover better and feel less tired if you spend some time returning your body to its pre-exercise state. This is called cooling down. Warming up and cooling down will add a few minutes to your walking workout but are both so beneficial that it is time well spent.

Warming up

Most of us lead a relatively inactive life and spend a lot of our work and leisure time sat down. All this sitting means that our muscles tend to shorten and our joints sort of “dry up” and become less mobile. This is because the lubricating substance that keeps your joints supple, called synovial fluid, is produced on demand and so, if you don’t move much, your joints tend to be under-lubricated. Although walking is a low to moderate intensity activity, going too fast too soon, especially after being sedentary, could result in an injury and if you are injured you can’t exercise so avoidance is always the best policy.

How to warm up

Pulse raiser – perform a few minutes of slow progressing to faster walking – gradually increase your pace and stride length. This is the part of the warm up that leaves you warm, (no surprise there then!) gradually elevates your breathing and heart rate and increases blood flow around your body. In addition, this part of your warm up will also increase synovial fluid production within your joints. Working on a scale of one to ten – ten being flat out, one being doing nothing, by the end of your pulse raiser you should feel like you are hitting a five.

Dynamic stretches – contrary to popular methodology, stretching does not have to be a static activity; especially in a warm up. You’ve just spent five minutes getting your heart rate and body temperature up so it makes little sense to spend a further five or so minutes standing still so you get cold and your heart rate drops all the way back down again.

Dynamic stretches are designed to take your muscles through a full range of movement and are basically stretches “on the go”. In addition, they ensure your joints are doubly mobilized as each movement also takes your major articulations through a full range of movement. There are five exercises in this sequence; perform ten to fifteen repetitions of each one and move from one exercise to the next without pausing to maintain your elevated heart rate and body temperature. On particularly cold days or after lengthy periods of being immobile, it may be a good idea to repeat the sequence two or even three times before moving onto more energetic activities.

1. Squat to overhead reach and twist
2. Push, pull and step back
3. Pull and twist
4. Lunge with a twist
5. Step over and duck under
Squat to overhead reach and twist
With your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands by your sides, squat down and then stand up. As you rise, lift your arms above your head and make yourself as tall as you can. Once you are fully upright to add a small twist to mobilize your spine and waist. Lower your arms, square your shoulders and repeat. Try to increase the depth of your squat as your joints and muscles begin to loosen up.

“Warm up your body with squat, reach and twists”
Push, pull and step back
Stand with your feet together and your arms extended in front of you at shoulder-height. Pull your hands back and into the sides of your chest and simultaneously step back pushing your heel to the floor to gently stretch your calf. Bring your feet back together and extend your arms again. Repeat but step back with your opposite leg.

“A great calf stretch before walking”
**Pull and twist**

Stand with your feet together and arms extended in front of you at shoulder-height. Keeping your arms up and perpendicular to the floor, pull your left arm back and simultaneously reach further forward with your right as you twist your upper body though ninety degrees. Pull your right arm back, push your left arm forwards and twist in the opposite directions. Imagine you are pulling a rope in towards you. Keep your elbows high and your knees slightly bent throughout.

“Imagine you are pulling on a rope…”
Lunge with a twist
With your feet together and your hands lightly touching your temples, take a large step forwards and bend your legs so your rear knee comes within a couple of inches of the floor. Simultaneously rotate your upper body towards your leading knee. Return to the starting position and repeat on the opposite side.

“This exercise warms you up and improves your balance”
Step over and duck under
Imagine you are standing next to a waist-high hurdle. Step sideways and lift your legs as though you were stepping over the barrier. Next, step back again but this time duck under the imaginary hurdle. Perform half of your repetitions in one direction then swap so you are leading with your opposite leg.

“This exercise really loosens your legs”
Cooling down

Once you have finished your walk it’s time to cool down. The cool down can really test your workout discipline as it’s very tempting to just collapse in a heap or head straight for the shower glad that you have finished your exercise for the day. Cool downs are designed to return your body to its pre-exercise state—a condition called homeostasis—which literally means hormonally balanced. You must return your body to homeostasis for the recovery process to begin. In addition to kick-starting the recovery process, cool downs promote flexibility and can also reduce the severity and duration of post exercise muscle soreness.

How to cool down

a) Pulse lowerer—The purpose of the pulse lowerer is to promote venous return and help supply your hard-worked muscles with freshly oxygenated blood. When you exercise, blood “pools” within your working muscles and with it, the waste products of metabolism accumulate. Flushing your muscles through with freshly oxygenated blood helps clear these metabolic remnants away and promotes recovery. A pulse lower is merely the reversal of the pulse raiser performed in your warm up; simply reduce your walking speed over three to five minutes. You should finish your pulse lowerer with your breathing approaching normal and feeling ready to do some stretching.

b) Stretches—The dynamic stretches performed in the warm up are great at preparing your muscles for exercise but not so good for improving or maintaining your flexibility. Flexibility, also known as suppleness, is the range of movement available at your joints and is an important if often overlooked fitness component.

The best stretching choice for your cool down is static stretches. Static stretches, as the name implies, are stretches that are held for time rather than performed for repetitions. Static stretches come in two main types: maintenance and developmental.

Maintenance stretches are held for ten to twenty seconds and are designed to stop you losing your flexibility. This type of stretching is ideal if you already have good flexibility. Developmental stretches are held for thirty to sixty seconds or more and are used when you want to improve your flexibility. Your cool down may contain one or both types of stretching depending on your current flexibility requirements.

Your stretching prescription...

To save you having to design your own cool down, just perform the following stretches after each and every walk. Hold the stretches for as long as you deem necessary based on your flexibility. As a general rule, if the muscle you are stretching feels tight, hold the stretch for longer.
1) Standing calf stretch
Stand arms’ length from a wall or post and place your hands out at shoulder level. Step your left leg back and bend your right knee. Press your left heel into the floor ensuring that your ankle, knee and hip are aligned and your left foot is pointing straight at the wall. Keep your head and chest up for the duration of the stretch. Change legs and repeat.
2) Standing quad stretch
Perform this stretch next to a wall or post if you need help with balance. Bend your left leg behind you and grasp around your ankle with your left hand. Point your left knee down at the floor and keep your legs together. Pull your left foot towards your bottom. Hold this position while maintaining an upright torso. On completion, change legs and repeat.
3) Standing hamstring stretch
With your leg straight, place your heel on the floor and bend your opposite leg. Push your hips back, lean forward from the hips and gently lower your chest towards your thighs. Increase the stretch by pushing your hips to the rear and not by rounding your upper back. Change legs and repeat.
4) Kneeling hip flexor stretch
Kneel down on the floor and then take a large step forward so that your front shin is vertical and your rear leg is extended behind you, knee placed on the floor. Keep your body upright. Relax and sink your hips down towards the floor. Slide your rear leg further back as necessary. Place your hands on your front thigh and hold this position for the required duration. Come out of the stretch slowly, change legs and repeat.
5) Seated groin stretch
Sit on the floor with the soles of your feet together and your legs bent. Draw your feet as close as possible to your groin. Wrap your hands around your ankles and place your elbows on your legs. Use your arms to gently push your knees down towards the floor if required. Sit up tall – no slouching!
6) Lying ab stretch
Lie on your front with your arms bent, your forearms flat on the floor and your hands extended in front of you. Imagine you are reading a book while lying on a beach! Lift your chest and hold this position for the required length of time. Keep your hips on the floor and your legs straight throughout this stretch.

7) Lying glute stretch with spinal twist
Lie on your back with your legs straight and your hands by your sides. Bend your right leg and place your foot next to your left knee. Put your right arm on the floor at shoulder height and reach your left arm across your body, grasping the outside of your knee. Roll your lower body to the left, keeping your arm flat on the floor. Hold this position for the desired duration before slowly returning to the centre and repeating the stretch on the other side.
8) Standing Chest Stretch
Stand up straight and place your hands on your lower back. Keeping your torso upright, push your elbows back to stretch your chest and shoulders. For a more challenging stretch, you can extend your arms as shown in the second image.
9) Standing Lat Stretch
Interlink your fingers and press your arms up and overhead. Reach up as high as you can. You should feel a mild stretch in your sides and beneath your armpits. Lean slightly to each side to increase the depth of stretch.
Seven tips for superior static stretching

Stretching is important for injury prevention and general health but it’s only beneficial if you do it properly. Follow these tips to ensure you get the most from your stretching while eliminating all the risk...

1. Only stretch your muscles when they are warm—stretching cold muscles may lead to injury.

2. Do not bounce! Bouncing when stretching is dangerous and can also result in injury.

3. Stay relaxed when stretching—do not let your shoulders, jaw, neck or hands tense up as this will reduce the effectiveness of your stretching.

4. Breathe! Exhale as you relax into a stretch. Holding your breath will only impair your stretching.

5. If you are really inflexible, consider stretching every day—possibly twice or more for particularly stiff muscles. If it’s taken you years to stiffen up, it’ll take more than a few minutes a week to make you flexible again!

6. If you find it difficult to find the time to stretch after your walking workout—maybe because you are hungry or in a rush to get to work—just perform a few maintenance stretches after exercising and then have a proper stretch when it’s more convenient e.g. when watching the TV at the end of your day.

7. Never force a stretch—if you feel any burning or your muscles start shaking uncontrollably, you are probably overdoing it so back off before you hurt yourself.
5) How to Make Progress

One of the great truisms of exercise is “if you always do what you have always done, you’ll always get what you always got”. If that sounds like some sort of devilish tongue twister then I’m sorry but this “rule” is all but unbreakable if you want to see progress in your fitness, fat loss and health.

When you place a stress on your body, and exercise is a form of stress, your body is shocked into action and makes certain changes to ensure that, the next time it is exposed to a similar stress, it is better able to deal with it. These changes, or more properly, adaptations, are what you and I would describe as increased fitness.

The thing is, if you only ever expose your body to the same stress, it has no reason to adapt further.

In weightlifting, if you only ever lifted a 25-lbs weight, you’d only ever get 25-lbs strong. If you want to get stronger, you have to lift more weight. Week by week, adding a pound or two to the bar means you’ll gradually but progressively get stronger.

This principle of adaptation can just as easily be applied to cardiovascular exercise. If you are a walking newbie, initially, a 10-minute walk may be all you can manage but after a few similar outings, you should find that 10-minutes no longer provides much of a challenge; your fitness now matches the stress of your workout. If you stick with 10-minute walks, your fitness will plateau and you’ll only ever be 10-minutes fit.

If you want to improve your fitness (and your health as the two are inextricably linked) you’ll need to walk a little further – say 12-minutes.

Again, after a few 12-minute walks, your body will adapt to the stress of this distance so it’s time again to up the ante and make your workout more demanding.

You can keep using this simple progression, called linear progression, to increase your fitness from close to zero to all but hero level – just keep adding a minute or two (or 250 steps or 200-meters or whatever) to your walks week by week or whenever you feel you are ready to go a little further. Slowly but surely your body will adapt and become fitter.

However, and this is where linear progression can run into problems, you will probably find that eventually, you simply do not have the time to keep on adding miles to your daily walk. If you started off walking for 10-minutes on the first of January and added a minute a week until the end of the year, your daily walk would end up being 62-minutes long which might be okay if you are retired, unemployed or otherwise have a lot of time on your hands but for many people is simply too big a time commitment. As soon as walking becomes a chore, you’ll probably drop it from your schedule so it’s important to have alternative methods for increasing the demand of your walking workout if just adding time/distance is out of the question.

So, how else can you increase the difficulty of your walking workouts? Good question! But before I answer that, remember one of my ten walking commandments – increase your distance gradually. This rule can also be applied to whatever other methods you decide to use to make your walks more challenging. As previously mentioned, doing too much too soon is a recipe for injury so make haste slowly and, if you’ll excuse the pun, walk before you run!
Also, it’s worth noting that you do not have to make all of your weekly walks more challenging; it’s okay to make just one or two of them harder. As the weeks pass by, increase the difficulty of more of your weekly walks until, maybe a month or two down the line, you have increased the difficulty of all your weekly workouts. Making all of your walks more difficult straight off the bat is a good way to tire yourself out unnecessarily.

Here are a few ways you can increase the difficulty of your walks without making your walks longer...

1. **Increase your walking speed**
   If your current walking route takes 25-minutes to complete, try and cover the same distance in 24-minutes. You may feel a little awkward walking more quickly than usual but that is simply because you are doing something new. Maintain your new speed for a week or two and then try and shave another minute off your time. Walk faster and faster as the weeks progress until you are walking so quickly you feel you are almost about to break into a run. This fast speed will increase the cardiovascular demands of your workout and also burn more calories.

2. **Do some intervals**
   Interval training involves alternating periods of hard exercise with periods of rest. For our purposes, this means walking fast for a minute or two and then walking at a more comfortable pace to recover. Continue alternating fast and normal walking speeds over your regular walking course.

3. **Hill walking**
   Walking up hill is more demanding than walking on the flat. Seek out hills and walk up them to push your fitness up a level. Long, gradual inclines and short, steep hills are both effective ways to increase your fitness so try both and see which you prefer. Walk up fast, walk back down slowly and you have a great hill interval training session. Take care on the descents though, especially on steeper hills, as walking downhill can place a significant stress on your knees.

4. **Add some weight**
   Who do you think has to work harder when walking; someone who weighs 120-lbs or someone who weighs 180-lbs? As with most types of exercise, the heavier the person, the harder the exercise. Your bodyweight is probably fairly stable or is even going down a bit as you get fitter but you can TEMPORARILY increase it so your workouts become more demanding by donning a back pack, wearing ankle or wrist weights, holding dumbbells in your hands or wearing a weight vest. Each one of these options will increase your bodyweight and therefore make your workout more demanding. As effective as this strategy is, remember to make haste slowly and only add a small amount of weight at a time. An addition of five to ten-percent of your bodyweight is enough to start with. Adding weight places an additional stress on your muscles and bones and adding too much too fast could result in sore joints and even injury. This method is safe but only if you keep your weight increases gradual and small.

5. **Add some jogging**
   If you have peaked in terms of walking speed and feel like you are about to break into a jog, why not go for it?! While jogging does place more stress on your joints than walking, it is a natural extension of walking. Using the interval method described above, you could walk for three to
five-minutes and then jog for one to two-minutes. Alternate between walking and jogging and, if you want, gradually increase the length of time you spend jogging and reduce the length of your recovery walks. Who knows, you may find that jogging is as if not more enjoyable than walking.

Please note that as jogging and running are more stressful on your joints they are not for everyone. I’ve done a lot of running in the past but now find that even a relatively short run makes my poor old knees ache whereas walking causes me no problems at all. If jogging and running aren’t for you then don’t worry – you are in good company. Use one of the other five walking progressions to increase your fitness levels.

6. **Get off road**

I expect you’ll do much of your walking on roads and pavements which is fine and convenient but you will find that walking on grass, trails, sand, or anywhere “off road” makes walking more challenging. These uneven surfaces mean your muscles have to work harder to keep you stable and the shifting ground means your gait will be less economical. In exercise, less economy is good as it means you use more energy. If you are going to venture off road, make sure your walking shoes are up to the job; it may be worth buying some walking boots to protect your feet and provide some ankle support. And, of course, if you are venturing far from home in the wilds of nature, make sure you tell someone where you are going, what time you’ll be back and dress for whatever weather you are likely to face. Adventurous, off road, walking is a more serious undertaking than walking around your neighbourhood during your lunch break so like a good boy scout make sure you are prepared!

**There are several ways you can inject some variation into your walks to keep your fitness levels progressing. If you want to get fitter through walking, do your best to increase the difficulty of your walks by using one, some or all of these useful methods.**
6) Injuries – Avoidance and Treatment

Although walking is a relatively genteel form of exercise, that doesn’t mean it is not without risk. Injuries sustained while walking are generally minor but that doesn’t mean that you should ignore any aches and pains you develop as a result of your new active lifestyle. Because there are some similarities between walking and running, in terms of biomechanics and joints/muscles used, some of the common injuries that face runners can also be a problem for keen walkers too although incidence and severity tends to be less for walkers.

The first strike in the battle against injuries is to avoid them in the first place. This is easier said than done because, sometimes, injuries “just happen”. But, as an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, follow these tips to minimize your risks...

1. Adhere to the ten-percent rule
Increase your daily and weekly walking mileage by no more than ten-percent at a time. While you probably could walk further, doing so increases your injury risk. Slow, steady but continuous progress is better than fast progress followed by injury. Remember, make haste slowly.

2. Mix it up
Don’t always walk on the roads. Road walking maybe the most convenient way to get your exercise fix but it’s also the most injurious and unforgiving surface. Walk on wooded trails, grassland and generally off road from time to time to reduce stress and minimize your risk of lower limb injuries.

3. Get strong
Walking is great for your heart and lungs but can leave your muscles weak as kittens. Weak muscles are more prone to injury. Hit the gym and pump some iron once or twice a week under the guidance of a personal trainer or strength coach. Focus on single-leg exercises, your core and your postural muscles to help balance out any potentially negative effects of walking.

4. Get supple
Stretching is vital for injury prevention but most exercisers only stretch once they have actually suffered an injury and it’s too late by then! Stretch every day, paying special attention to your hips, glutes, calves and hamstrings. Although uncomfortable initially, also consider buying and using a foam roller for some much needed self massage. Tight muscles are much more prone to injury so keeping supple is a must.

5. Take a break
Don’t be a slave to your routine and while walking when you feel tired is admirable, it is also an injury waiting to happen. Eventually, the wheels will fall off and you will get injured. Take periodic breaks from exercise to give your body time to recover from the stress of your workouts. Try having one easy week a month or taking a week off completely every eight weeks. You won’t lose fitness and you’ll actually come back from your break feeling fitter, stronger and well rested. Remember, it’s better to take a week off because you want to than have to take a month off because of injury.
If, after you have followed these tips you are still unlucky enough to have been injured, chances are you’ll have one of these common maladies. Get some expert advice if you are injured but make sure you do your research too so you know what you have done to yourself and how to ensure you recover fully.

1. Runner’s Knee
Patellofemoral pain syndrome (PFPS), or "runner’s knee," is the irritation of the cartilage on the underside of the patella (kneecap). Despite the name, PFPS can also affect walkers and usually flares up during or after long walks or while descending steep hills and stairs. It is commonly caused by an incorrectly tracking knee cap and knee joint instability which is caused by weak quadriceps and gluteal muscles. To prevent this problem, keep your quads and glutes strong by doing leg extensions, squats, band-resisted side steps and lunges and by being aware of your knee position as you walk; do not let your knees roll inward.

2. Achilles Tendinitis
Your Achilles tendon attaches your calf muscles to your heel bone. Strong and thick, it is also prone to becoming inflamed and swollen if you increase your walking mileage too much too soon, walk in unsuitable shoes, do too much hill walking or have overly tight calves. Achilles tendinitis is commonly treated with rest, ice and stretching and keeping your calf muscles strong and supple. Avoid shoes that have high heel tabs that will rub on the tendon – this will only make matters worse.

3. Plantar Fasciitis
The plantar fascia is the thick band of tissue in the bottom of the foot that extends from the heel to the toes. People with tight calf muscles and a high arch are more prone to plantar fasciitis. Although it may be linked to an increase in activity, plantar fasciitis can occur without any identifiable reason although it is more common in heavy footed and heavily bodied walkers as the plantar fascia is a vital part of your shock absorbing mechanism. Treatment includes calf stretches, rest, icing the bottom of the foot, deep tissue massage, and anti-inflammatory injections.

4. Iliotibial Band Syndrome
The iliotibial (IT) band lies along the outside of the thigh from the hip to the knee. When you walk, your knee flexes and extends which causes the IT band to rub on the side of the femur. This can cause irritation if you increase your mileage too quickly, especially if you’re doing a lot of downhill walking. Exercisers who develop ITBS often over pronate, have a leg-length or leg strength discrepancy, or suffer from weak hip abductor and gluteal muscles. Prevent ITBS by stretching and strengthening the muscles on the outside of your hips, using a foam roller on your ITB and treating any left to right leg strength discrepancies with corrective strength training.

5. Shin Splints
The term shin splints refers to pain along or just behind the shinbone or tibia — the large bone in the front of your lower leg. Shin splints result from too much force being placed through your shinbone and the connective tissues that attach your tibialis anterior muscles to the bone. Shin splints are common in walkers and those who participate in high impact activities with sudden stops and starts, such as basketball, soccer or tennis. Strengthen your tibialis anterior muscles, located on the front of your shin, by performing toe raises against a resistance band. Also avoid too much walking on hard surfaces and wearing shoes that have lost their support and shock absorbency.
6. Muscle strains
Muscle strains are normally the result of a rapid or unexpected loading or stretching, for example lifting a heavy weight or sprinting without an adequate warm up. To prevent such injuries, always warm up thoroughly before exertion, stay within your physical limits and work on your strength and flexibility. Muscle strains normally respond well to rest and ice and, as muscle has a good blood supply, heal relatively quickly.

Injury first aid
If you suffer an injury, do not try and tough it out and walk through it. Remember, pain is your body’s way of telling you something is wrong. You wouldn’t drive your car with a flat tire so don’t try and walk through an injury; you will end up making it much worse.

Once you are off your injury, you can start some self-treatment which can help speed your recovery. This is not designed to replace expert medical treatment but may mean you can return to walking sooner.

Rest – stay off your injured limb as much as possible. This may mean spending more time seated than you are used to or using a crutch or cane for a few days to keep weight off your injury. Your injury will heal much faster with appropriate rest.

Ice – cooling the injured area can help minimize swelling and allow for a more rapid healing process. Ice is also an effective pain killer. Apply ice up to five times a day for 15 to 20 minutes at a time in the first 48 hours of injury.

Compression – a snug fitting bandage can help reduce swelling and provide support for your injured limb. This doesn’t mean you can strap up your injury and head out for a walk though! Using strapping to immobilize the injury and help force you to rest.

Elevation – raising your injured limb above heart-height increases drainage and helps prevent the build up of fluids around the injured area. This prevents swelling and allows for a more speedy recovery. This means that, for most running lower limb injuries, you’ll need to spend time sat down with your feet up.

Being injured is nobody’s idea of a good time so do your best to avoid getting injured in the first place. If you are unlucky enough to get injured, don’t rush your recovery but, rather, follow a slow and steady return to walking and do your rehab. Doing too much too soon, the likely suspect in most injuries anyway, will probably result in the same injury occurring again.
7) Staying Motivated

When it comes to exercise and staying fit, some people are naturally self-motivated. These are the people who never skip a workout, would exercise in the gym car park if they turned up and found the gym was closed or take their running shoes on holiday with them and actually use them for running and not just strolling leisurely from the bar to the pool and back again.

Self-motivated people don’t need personal trainers or training partners to keep them on the straight and narrow path to fitness; they can do it all by themselves.

Such self-motivated people are relatively rare though. For the rest of us mere mortals, getting and staying fit can be a real battle. On one hand, we know we’ll feel better afterward and that exercise is important for our health and wellbeing but, on the other hand, exercise can be such a chore!

The secret to making exercise less of a pain in the butt and more enjoyable is to make it a habit. Habits, as you know, can be good or bad, and are established as a result of repetitive behaviour. Do something enough times and it becomes a part of your daily routine. In this chapter I want to share some helpful and practical tips to help you make exercise a habit and keep you on the path to improved fitness and health.

Set a workout schedule

If you have a dentist appointment booked for 3pm on Wednesday, you make sure your day is organized in such a way that you are at your dentist’s office at the allotted time. Only some kind of scheduling problem or serious mishap will prevent you from going to the dentist. The same is true of most of the appointments that are part of everyday life; collecting the kids from school, dinner reservations, work meetings and movie start times. You have a specific thing to do at a specific time and so you do it.

Why not treat exercise the same way? Two, three or four times a week, schedule your workout and then stick to that appointment like you would any other. Set a start time and a finish time and prepare for it like you would for anything else in your diary; pack your gym bag in advance, make sure you will arrive in time and do not double book yourself. Rather than just say “I’m going to exercise more”, make a real commitment to fitness by scheduling your workouts.

Recruit a training partner

“Misery loves company” or so the expression goes. Another good expression is “a problem shared is a problem halved”. And who can forget that “two heads are better than one”. Don’t exercise alone – recruiting a good training partner is a great way to make exercise more of a habit and keep you honest in your workouts.

If you agree to meet someone else at the gym or for a walk, you are much more likely to do that planned workout as someone else is relying on you to turn up. If you were going it alone and decided to skip your workout, no one else would know but you. However, by committing to meet someone else, you are much MUCH more likely to show up.

Training partners can help distract you when you are feeling the burn, provide encouragement and correction when you need it, challenge you and push you to work harder so you get better results and keep you safe. And, of course, you’ll be doing the exact same thing for them.
Take care when selecting a training partner. Make sure they are of a similar level of fitness, are reliable, want to exercise the same way you do, that they won’t skip workouts and that you actually enjoy their company. A good training partner can magnify your workout enjoyment and results whereas a bad one can make a workout a less than pleasant experience.

Set some goals
Getting fit, toning up and losing weight are all great reasons for exercising but what do these terms actually mean? If you think about it, they are pretty arbitrary expressions that don’t really mean very much. Chances are you’ll get on much better with making exercise a habit if you have specific goals in mind – a reason for working out.

Goals can be whatever you want them to be but examples include...

- Being fit enough to walk four miles
- Being strong enough to do 30 push-ups
- Losing 20-lbs
- Losing four inches off your waist
- Dropping three dress sizes by next summer

Once you have one or several goals, you have a focus to your workouts and a reason for hitting the gym or pounding the pavement. Choose exercise activities that will take you toward your goals and also align your diet and lifestyle to those goals. Make your goals challenging but realistic and make sure you reward yourself when you reach them.

Once you have reached your goals, what do you do? Set new ones of course! You can choose loftier versions of your original goals or a whole new set of targets; it’s up to you.

Choose activities that slot seamlessly into your lifestyle
Walking, as we’ve discussed, is a simple activity that can be performed anywhere and anytime. You don’t even have to change your clothes – you just pop on your walking shoes and head out the door! Some types of exercise almost encourage drop out because they are complicated, time consuming, expensive or not very accessible. By making walking your workout of choice, you have already stacked the odds in your favour so you are much less likely to drop out of exercise. Walking, it could be argued, is the ultimate “excuse free” workout!

Make a decision balance sheet
Like most things we do, exercise has pros and cons that should be considered. On the plus side, it can leave you feeling fit, healthy, energetic, lean, strong, positive, creative, stress-free and satisfied. On the down side, you need to find time to exercise, sometimes working out is uncomfortable, it may cost you money to join a gym or buy suitable walking shoes, and you could spend the time you spend exercising sat on your sofa watching TV...

Take a sheet of paper and divide it vertically in two. On one side, write all the benefits you will experience by starting and maintaining a new exercise routine. Think about not only the physical aspects but the emotional, social and even spiritual benefits of exercise too. On the other side, make a list of the negatives of exercise. These should include financial and time costs, what you may have to give up and any other negatives you can think of.
On completion, you should see there are considerably more benefits than there are negatives to getting and staying fit. If you find there are more negatives than positives, maybe you need to consider a different fitness activity that tips the scales more toward the positives of exercise.

Whenever you feel you are losing the battle of attrition, revisit this decision balance sheet and remind yourself of all the benefits of exercise and how much they outweigh the negatives.

Keep a walking diary
When you start walking for fitness, log each and every walk you do in a special diary bought specifically for the purpose. Write the date, time, how far you walked, how you felt and what the weather was doing. Any time you feel as though your motivation is beginning to decline, take a look at your diary and you’ll probably see that you are walking further and faster than you were when you started and the going is easier too. Also make a note of your body weight and your waist measurement from one week to the next so you can track that too. As the days turn into weeks and the weeks turn into months, your diary will document all of the changes your body has gone through since you started your walking regime. Let your progress keep you motivated and remember that nothing succeeds like success!

Like any habit, exercise can take a while to become part of your normal routine and there may well be times when you feel like giving it all up. Don’t worry – this is normal. However, if you truly value your long term health, want to be fit and healthy long into your old age and live the most productive and independent life you can, you should endeavour to stick with it and remember, in a few short months, you’ll have established a habit that will do you nothing but good.
8) Technology to the Rescue

Technology has come a very long way in the last 30-years. Back in the not-so-distant past, computers and the like were rare and now most of us have one in our phones! Technological advancements have affected just about every aspect of life – including fitness. Until relatively recently, the only fitness gadgets were clunky “sports” cassette or CD players and stopwatches! There are now several technology developments which may help make your walking workouts more productive...

Pedometers

Pedometers can be smart phone apps or stand alone devices and are designed to track how many steps you take and, subsequently, how far you walk per day and how many calories you burn. While a smart phone app is okay, a dedicated pedometer is better because, ideally, you don’t want to be interrupted on your walk by an every-chirping mobile phone.

The CSX pedometer is an especially useful device that can help you get the most out of your walking workouts. Set up is easy – you simply input your weight and stride length – and then you are off. The unit works silently and is so compact you can have it with you wherever you go. It works automatically anytime you take ten or more steps so you are free to focus on your walk.

With your CSX pedometer you can...

- Set daily step goals and change them anytime you wish
- Check the daily progress bar to see how many steps you have clocked up so far
- Use the memory function to see your progress through the week – the pedometer also automatically resets at midnight so you can easily track your daily steps, distance and activity
- See how many calories you have burned per day
- Track the distance you have walked in miles or kilometres
- Keep an eye on the time with the built in clock

Pedometers can help keep you honest and also make you more accountable as it’s easy to see a missed workout – there will be no data recorded.

Fitness websites

One of the biggest changes in fitness recently has been the HUGE increase of information freely available via the internet. Not so long ago, if you had a pressing fitness question or wanted exercise help, you had to buy a book or consult a fitness coach. Now, every burning fitness question you will ever have can be answered via the internet and there are even sites dedicated to fitness walking. Of course, not all the information is 100-percent accurate but with some weeding and a bit of selective reading, you should find all the fitness information you need somewhere on the net.
Social networks
Joining and then creating a profile on a fitness network like FitDay, LiveStrong or Fitocracy is a great way to meet like-minded people and get support in your fitness quest. You’ll also find useful tools like workout and meal planners, route planners, plenty of articles and advice and ways to track your progress. Being a member of one of these networks can help make you more accountable and less likely to drop out of exercise; if you disappear for a while, your fellow members will know! Using a social network means you have literally hundreds of people supporting your efforts and you, in turn, support theirs. Whether you are after fitness advice or want to swap some healthy eating recipes, fitness-orientated social networks are a good place to be.

Fitness clothing and equipment
In days gone by, fitness clothing was modified street clothing and often made from materials that weren’t ideal for the discerning exerciser. Footwear was not much better. However now you have access to clothing made specifically for exercise and using state of the art materials so your workouts can be as comfortable, safe and productive as possible. Modern fitness clothing keeps you warm and dry without soaking up lots of water and shoes are lighter and can be selected according to gait mechanics. If you find the weather often seems to be conspiring to stop you from heading out on your walk, there is a wide range of specialist foul weather clothing especially designed for walkers which is all but guaranteed to make your walks a pleasure whatever the weather.

Of course, you don’t NEED all this technology – people have been walking and staying fit for years without it but some, many or all of these items may help you take your fitness to the next level. Embrace new technologies and enjoy your fittest, strongest, leanest year yet!
9) Eat, Walk and Be Healthy!

Nutrition is a hugely complicated subject – one I both love and hate. I love nutrition because it’s such an interesting part of the health and fitness conundrum but I hate it because so much nonsense is written about what we should and shouldn’t eat.

Sadly, much of the information circulating about food is driven by food manufacturers and so is deliberately skewed to show a particular food product or food group in a certain light. In addition, much of the weight loss information doing the rounds is extreme, unhealthy and not ideal for long term adherence and many diets can leave you fatter than when you started them.

In this section I want to tell you a little about the main food groups and lift the lid on the best most straightforward way to lose weight and keep it off – clean eating.

A Quick Guide to Protein

Protein is an important food group and not just for people who lift weights for exercise. While carbohydrates tend to be the most abundant food group, protein is no less vital – especially if you care about how you look and perform. In this chapter I’ll explain a bit about protein and tell you more about this essential nutrient.

What is protein?

Protein, which contains four calories per gram, is made from substances called amino acids. Amino acids are best thought of as being the protein alphabet. Where we use letters to spell different words, different amino acid configurations make up different proteins. For example, when you eat chicken, your body breaks the protein down into its constituent amino acids and then turns them into what you need – be it bigger biceps, leaner legs, a healthier heart or a stronger spleen!

As mentioned, chicken is a good source of protein but then so are all types of meat, poultry and eggs. Dairy and soya are also viable protein sources. Plant foods including grains, nuts, vegetables, beans and seeds also contain amino acids so it is possible for vegetarians to get enough protein without resorting to eating animals although this does require more planning and organization.

Irrespective of the type of protein you eat, they all end up as amino acids that then play a vital role in the health and function of your body.

Complete and incomplete proteins

Proteins can be categorized as complete or incomplete. This refers to their amino acid content. Amino acids, of which there are 20, are either essential or non-essential. All this means is that of the 20, eight must be present in your diet so your body can make the remaining 12. Sometimes,
depending on who you read, nine amino acids are listed as being essential and 11 as non-essential but it really doesn’t matter that much.

Foods that have all the essential eight (or nine!) amino acids are subsequently known as complete proteins and eating a diet rich in these foods means that your body has everything it needs to make the remaining 12 (or 11) non-essential amino acids. Foods deemed to be complete proteins include the usual suspects of meat, fish, eggs, dairy and soya.

Nuts, beans, vegetables and grains contain some essential amino acids but not all which means they are deemed to be incomplete proteins, in fact, most of us would actually say these foods are not even proteins at all but sources of carbohydrates. Foods that are deemed incomplete can be combined to make complete proteins – something called complementary proteins. The amino acids missing from beans are present in wheat so beans on toast makes for a nutritious, protein-rich meal.

So what does protein do?
Broadly speaking, your body needs protein for two main reasons: structure and function. Structure refers to how protein makes up a large percentage of your muscle mass, skin and internal organs as well as your hair, bones and nails. Functional proteins, also known as homeostatic proteins, are integral parts of enzymes and hormones—chemicals that control the way your body works.

Both types of protein are derived from the food you eat so next time you are chowing down on a plate of eggs, remember that those amino acids are not just making your muscles bigger and stronger; they are also ensuring your body runs as healthily and efficiently as possible.

In some extreme circumstances, protein is also a source of energy—although this is relatively rare. Imagine you are on a long hike and, despite having eaten plenty of carbs beforehand; you have been going for so long you have fully depleted your glycogen (intramuscular glucose) stores and are essential running on empty. In this situation, your body will go all “cannibal” on you and start breaking down your muscle for energy. This process, called gluconeogenesis (literally making new glucose) means you will be able to keep on walking albeit slowly and painfully. The same thing would happen if you were stranded on a desert island for a few months with nothing substantial to eat.

Protein is also useful for dieters as it has a very high thermal effect. All this means is that eating protein uses a lot of energy and subsequently causes a significant spike in your metabolic rate. The thermal effect of protein is around 30-percent which means for every 100 grams you eat; 30 grams worth of energy is used in the breakdown and utilization of the amino acids. This is one of the reasons high protein/low carbohydrate diets such as the Atkins diet are often very effective.

How much protein do you need?
The type of exercise you do dictates how much protein you need and can use on a daily basis. Activities that are very catabolic (result in a lot of muscle breakdown) like bodybuilding and weightlifting need more protein whereas less catabolic activities such as walking or yoga require much less and sedentary people require even less protein. If, however, you are purposely reducing your food intake with the goal of losing fat, increasing your protein intake can help preserve muscle mass which is often lost in periods of low calorie dieting.
All figures are grams of protein per kilogram of bodyweight:

**Sedentary adult 0.8g**  
**Recreational exerciser 0.8 – 1.5g**  
**Endurance athlete 1.2 – 1.6g**  
**Teenage athlete 1.5 – 2.0g**  
**Adult building muscle mass 1.5 – 1.7g**  
**Athlete restricting calories 1.8 – 2.0g**  
**Estimated upper limit 2.0g**  
**Ideal serving size 25 – 40 grams**

**What if I eat even more protein?**

Some exercisers make the mistake of thinking that more protein automatically means bigger muscles or better results. This is not really surprising when you consider the media hype that constantly surrounds protein supplements. If you didn’t know any better, it would be easy to conclude that taking a protein supplement was essential for everyone who exercises.

While protein is undeniably important, consuming above and beyond what you actually need will not magically give you better results from your exercise and certainly won’t make any difference if you aren’t training hard and regularly.

Protein, when consumed to excess, will simply result in a caloric surplus which will result in fat gain rather than increased muscle size so increased protein intake beyond your ability to utilize it will increase your weight but not the way you intend.

**The word protein comes from the Greek for primary proteus so it’s clear that protein is important but it’s not a magic bullet for fitness and health and too much can simply end up as expensive urine and unwanted body fat. Make sure you get enough protein to fuel your daily needs but don’t think that more is automatically better as this is not always the case.**
A Quick Guide to Carbohydrate

Carbohydrates, carbs for short, are the most abundant food group in most people’s diet. In fact, most government’s healthy eating models are based on carbohydrates and the standard recommendation is around 60-percent of your food intake should come from carbs. But what are carbs, what foods contain them and why do we need them? All good questions! You will find the answers in this brief guide to carbohydrates.

What is Carbohydrate?
Carbs, which contain roughly four calories per gram, are basically sugar, or more specifically glucose, although not obviously so in many cases. All carbohydrates are eventually broken down into glucose and then used in your body. It’s just some carbohydrates are made up of very complicated chains of glucose molecules which mean they have very little resemblance to the sugar you put in your coffee.

Carbohydrates come in two main forms: simple or complex. Simple carbs are generally sweet and sugary. Fruit and confectionary are perfect examples. Obviously, nutritionally, these foods are very different in terms of vitamin content and health benefits but, in carbohydrate terms, they are very similar. Their structure is made up primarily of simple mono and disaccharides (single and double sugar molecules) hence their name.

Complex carbohydrates, sometimes called starches, are longer and more complex chains of sugars called polysaccharides. This simply means they have little resemblance to sugar and generally taste much less sweet. Potatoes, rice, pasta and bread are all good examples of complex carbs.

Carbs can also be classified as refined or unrefined. Unrefined carbs are very close to their natural state and have been exposed to very little processing; brown rice, sweet potatoes and fruit for example. In contrast, refined carbohydrates have been heavily processed and stripped of much of their natural goodness; white rice, sweets, white pasta and white bread are good examples here.

In general, the less refined a carbohydrate is, the better it is likely to be for you as food processing usually results in stripping of fibre, vitamins and minerals and leaves nothing but a source of empty calories.

Why do we need carbohydrates?
For energy, your body uses a substance called ATP – short for adenosine tri-phosphate. ATP can be manufactured from carbohydrates or fat. If you need energy in a hurry – for example when you are
exercising vigorously – carbohydrate is your body’s preferred energy source. If, however, you need ATP slowly – for example while you are sleeping – your body will use fat to make ATP. Even the leanest person has an abundance of stored energy in the form of body fat so dietary carbs are your go-to source of instant energy. Your body also stores carbohydrate (in the form of glycogen which is simply glucose bound to water) in your muscles and liver so it has a ready supply of carbs when they are needed.

The bottom line is, the more energetic you are, the more carbohydrate you need per day. If you exercise for an hour or more most days of the week, you need abundant healthy carbs to keep your energy levels up for your workouts and to help you recover more quickly afterward. If, however, you are mostly sedentary, carbs are less important as you simply do not need such a readily available source of energy. It’s worth noting that unused carbs are easily converted to fat so it makes sense to try and “earn your carbs” and helps explain why low carb diets are popular and effective for weight loss.

**Timing your carb intake for best results**

To get the most from your carb intake, you should try and time it around periods of activity. Basically, eat for what you are going to do and have just done. Eating fast-acting simple carbs 15 minutes before a workout and immediately after makes the most of your ability and need to use carbs for fuel. Two hours before a workout, slower acting complex carbs are a better choice so that your energy levels peak as your stomach empties in time for your workout. Remember; if you are an endurance athlete, you need to consume plenty of carbs to fuel your training whereas an infrequent gym goer needs considerably less.

In general, select unrefined carbohydrates to make up the bulk of your carb intake. They are rich in fundamental vitamins, minerals and fibre which are essential for your health. Good old fruit, an unrefined simple carbohydrate, is also very healthy but they are also high in fast acting sugars so are best consumed just before or just after exercise. Dried fruit makes for an ideal snack before and during hard exercise but be careful not to eat too much because as it is dehydrated you can eat an awful lot of it and this may cause inadvertent weight gain.

**Carbs are often much maligned in the media and that’s a shame – carbs are a vital part of a well-balanced diet and the reality is, it’s not carbs that are the bad guy but heavily refined sugar and a sedentary lifestyle that are the culprit. Unrefined carbs are healthy and help fuel the active lifestyle. Just remember to adjust your carb intake based on your activity levels and you’ll get the most from this essential nutrient.**
A Quick Guide to Fibre

Fibre is part of the carbohydrate group and is present to one degree or another in all grains, fruits, vegetables, pulses, legumes and nuts. Technically a non-starch polysaccharide, or NSP for short, our digestive systems lack the necessary enzymes to break fibre down and so, as far as we are concerned, fibre is a calorie-free food. Although fibre does not contribute any energy to your daily diet, it provides numerous other health-related benefits.

Types of Fibre
Fibre can be classified as soluble or insoluble. This refers to its interaction with water. Soluble fibre forms a gel-like substance as it passes through your digestive track. Like a dry sponge, it soaks up liquid as it passes though your intestines and absorbs small but significant amounts of bile acid, cholesterol, fat and other such nastiness in your digestive system. Soluble fibre is found in the soft flesh of fruits, vegetables and grains. Think of soluble fibre as your friendly digestive-tract cleaner!

Insoluble fibre, sometimes called roughage, is found in the tough outer husk of grains as well as the skins of vegetables and fruit. Insoluble fibre passes through your digestive system like an old-fashioned bottle brush and gives it a good internal scrubbing. This helps keep your innards nice and clean!

Fibre Requirements
Despite being calorie and nutrient-free, fibre offers a wide range of health benefits. The RDA (recommended daily allowance) for fibre is around 35-grams per day, split evenly between soluble and insoluble varieties. Your total daily fibre requirement varies according to your age, weight and the amount of food you are eating which is why you may often see a recommended range for fibre consumption of 24 to 35 grams. As fibre is calorie free, there is very little harm in making sure you hit the upper ranges of this scale.

Fibre Benefits

Weight Control – as previously mentioned, fibre is calorie free. This means that foods that contain a lot of fibre such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables are generally lower in calories than less fibrously-dense foods. To put this in perspective, an apple and a typical biscuit both contain around 60 calories. Because much of the mass of the apple is made up from calorie-free fibre and water, compared to sugar and fat in the biscuit, the apple is bigger, far more filling and much more satisfying to eat. Most of us can eat a few biscuits in a single serving but it’s pretty unlikely you’ll eat the same number of apples!

Filling up on fibre is a great way to prevent overeating. Stretch receptors in your stomach send signals to your brain when it is full so you know when to stop eating. This message can take as long as 30 minutes to be sent and delivered. Fibrous foods cause greater gastric distension than non-fibrous foods. Simply put, this means you feel fuller, quicker which results in your brain getting the “stop eating” signal sooner than usual. This limits your potential for overeating.

Fibre also keeps food in your stomach for longer. By delaying gastric emptying, fibre also helps to control your blood glucose levels. Large fluctuations in blood glucose can trigger corresponding fluctuations in insulin levels. Roller coasting blood glucose levels play havoc with your hunger. A rapid drop in blood glucose can often result in cravings for carbohydrate (one reason never to go
grocery shopping on an empty stomach!) so by ensuring that your stomach empties slowly, fibre helps ensure that your blood glucose levels remain relatively stable.

**Digestive Health**

The hollow tubes of your intestines are made out of smooth muscle and like the muscles of your chest, arms and legs, benefit from a regular workout. Fibre provides the means to exercise your digestive system. A diet devoid of fibre will result in poor intestinal health in the same way that a lack of exercise will result in a flabby, weak body.

To push food through your digestive system, the smooth muscular tubes that make up your digestive tract must squeeze inward in an action called peristalsis. Picture a snake swallowing an egg and the wave-like undulations as the snake squeezes the egg down the length of its body – that’s peristalsis.

Low fibre foods do not travel through your hollow digestive tubes very easily. A large amount of pressure is required to push food along. Imagine trying to get the very last bit of toothpaste out of the tube – it’s a real challenge! Fibre adds bulk to your food and, consequently, it passes through your digestive system much more easily and with far less pressure. Easy food passage and reduced food transit time (the time it takes from ingestion to elimination) has a major impact on digestive health and is strongly linked to a lower incidence of diverticular disease, also known as diverticulitis. This is a painful and serious medical condition where bacteria-filled pockets and bulges develop in the walls of your intestines. By consuming adequate fibre, intestinal pressure is kept to a minimum and there is much less likelihood of developing this unpleasant disease.

Fibre might be calorie free but it’s very important for digestive health. Eat plenty of unrefined carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables and you should have no problems hitting your daily fibre requirements.
A Quick Guide to Fats

Fats are the most complicated and controversial subject in nutrition. Depending on who you read, they are either very bad for you and should be avoided at all costs or are essential for life and consumed in abundance. It’s not really possible to get into the pro and anti fat argument in this short chapter so rather than defend or vilify fats, I’ll focus on giving you the cold, hard facts about this particular food group.

Different forms of fat
Fats, which contain nine calories per gram, are found in four main types – saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and trans fats. The term saturated simply refers to the amount of hydrogen attached to the fat’s carbon chain. A saturated fat contains lots of hydrogen whereas a polyunsaturated fat is missing lots of hydrogen. This degree of hydrogen saturation (or hydrogenation) is what gives the different fats their properties.

Saturated fats
Saturated fats are generally solid at room temperature, the exceptions being palm and coconut oil which are liquids. Saturated fats are a good source of energy and your body also likes to use them for insulation. That layer of fat around your midriff? That’s mostly saturated fat. You also have a layer of saturated fat around your brain and other internal organs which protect them from impact. Saturated fat is commonly found in animal products such as meat and dairy.

If you want to lose weight, an easy approach is to reduce your saturated fat intake. This can be achieved by simply using less butter, selecting leaner cuts of meat, switching to low fat dairy products and cutting down on fatty processed foods. These small changes can result in a worthwhile reduction in calorie intake without significantly reducing the quantity of food you consume.

Monounsaturated fats
Monounsaturated fats are all oils and liquid at room temperature. This type of fat, commonly found in olives and olive oil, avocados, peanuts, cashew nuts, whole grain wheat, seeds and even beef, are closely linked to heart health and feature heavily in the Mediterranean diet. Because of the missing hydrogen molecules, monounsaturated fats can be described as being moderately reactive. This reactivity means that your body is less likely to use monounsaturated fats for fuel or convert them to body fat and more likely to use them for healthful, life-sustaining functions.

Polyunsaturated fats
Of all the fats, polyunsaturated fats are considered the most healthful. They are very reactive and play an important role in many aspects of health. They are so healthy and important that they are often referred to as essential fatty acids or EFAs for short.
EFAs come in two main types – Omega 3 and Omega 6. An easy way to remember which is which is that Omega 3 fats are mostly fish oils and Omega 6 are mostly vegetable, seed and nut oils and are also found in some whole grains such as quinoa.

EFAs are, as the name suggests, essential for maintaining your health. They play a vital role in heart health, the regulation of inflammation in your joints and circulatory system, the function of your brain and the health of your skin and hair. They are so healthy that many people take EFA supplements to ensure they are getting enough. Sources of EFAs include pumpkin seeds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, sunflower oil, oily fish, flax seeds, flax oil, sesame seeds and safflower oil. Almost everyone would benefit from taking a gram or two of fish oil every day.

**Trans Fats**
Trans fats occur naturally in even the healthiest diet but over consumption of this type of fat can be very unhealthy. Trans fats are the result of overheating mono and polyunsaturated oils or exposing them to too much air or light. This basically turns them “bad”, a state often called rancidity. Trans fats block the normal function of healthy, undamaged fats, and this can result in a wide variety of health problems.

Trans fats are commonly associated with numerous cancers, coronary heart disease, obesity, elevated blood glucose levels, low birth weight babies, elevated cholesterol levels, bone and tendon weakness and sterility. All in all, trans fats are best avoided.

While trans fats do occur naturally in foods such as eggs and fish, they do so in such small amounts that there is no real need for concern. However, many people consume a large amount of trans fats because they are very common in processed foods, takeaways and cheaply processed oils.

Of all the fats, trans fats are the most unhealthy so it makes sense to try and consume as little of these bad fats as possible. Cutting down on take away meals, processed baked goods, cheap processed meats, pre-prepared and pre-packaged meals, most margarines and roasted nuts will reduce your intake of trans fats significantly.

**Fat plays an important role in healthy nutrition and should provide between 20 and 30% of your total daily energy intake. Of your daily intake of fat, one third should come from saturates, one third from monounsaturates and one third from polyunsaturates. A very low fat diet is not necessarily a healthy diet as even normally lambasted saturated fats are essential for health. Trans fats, on the other hand, are nothing but trouble and should be avoided whenever possible.**
Clean Eating for Health and Fat Loss

When it comes to diets, there are literally thousands to choose from. Each one promises fast results and will probably work but this usually comes at a cost. The majority of “quick fix” diets are overly restrictive, leave you feeling hungry all the time, are not nutritionally balanced, frequently unhealthy and seldom encourage long term adherence. So, if you want to lose weight, stay healthy and eat better not just for a few weeks but for life, what should you do? The simple answer is to eat clean.

What is eating clean?

Eating clean simply refers to a diet consisting of food that has not been overly processed and has very few if any artificial additives, refined sugars, trans fats or other unhealthy ingredients. By eating clean, your diet will be naturally lower in calories, higher in essential nutrients such as fibre and vitamins and more or less devoid of artificial additives. And the best part about eating clean? You can eat this way indefinitely!

What are clean foods?

The easiest way to identify clean foods is simply look at the ingredients list. First of all, look for things you can’t pronounce or recognize as being food. If it sounds like something that might be found in a chemistry set, monosodium glutamate for example, chances are you don’t need to be eating it. Next, look out for added sugar. All carbohydrates contain naturally occurring sugar but many foods have refined sugars added to them to add taste and sweetness. Refined and added sugars increase the calorie content of your foods without adding nutrients so if you see sugar on the ingredient list, you should avoid this food item. Finally, look for trans fats, often labelled as hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. Give these a wide birth too – they are not good for you and are linked to a wide variety of health problems.

Degrees of processing

In addition to label reading, you can assess the “cleanliness” of a food by considering how much processing it has gone through from harvesting to the final food product on your plate. For example, porridge oats are harvested, dried, bagged and sold. You then cook them with water/milk. This is very little in terms of processing so that makes porridge oats a very clean food. In comparison, many breakfast cereals are virtually unrecognizable from their base ingredient of corn, rice, wheat or whatever. Packed with sugar, colours, flavour enhancers, preservatives and so on, the nutritional value of such foods is questionable.

Try to picture the origin of the base ingredient of the food you are eating. If it is only a manufacturing step or two from its original state then you can consider it as a clean food. The greater the processing your food has endured, the less nutritious it will be. Needless to say, fruit, vegetables, meat, fish, eggs, nuts and other foods in their natural state can definitely be considered as clean.

Food preparation

Just because a food is clean when you buy it, doesn’t mean it will stay that way! If you buy a clean ingredient like oatmeal but then use it to make cookies with margarine, artificial sweeteners and other less than healthy ingredients, the food in question will have to be considered dirty. It’s a case of the lowest common denominator will exert its characteristics on the healthy food and negate
many of its positive attributes. Prepare your food in such a way as to preserve its healthful properties.

**Clean eating and weight management**

Eating a diet rich in clean foods is not just healthier, it also makes losing and maintaining a healthy weight a snap! By eliminating sugary, processed and fatty foods, you are left with very little in the way of unwanted calories. In fact, if you are a hard training athlete, you may find eating clean means it’s difficult to eat enough unless you specifically seek out higher calorie clean foods like nuts and coconut milk.

If you want to really drop some fat while eating clean, reduce your carbohydrate intake by limiting your consumption of potatoes, rice, pasta etc and eat more vegetables in their place while maintaining your fat intake and slightly increasing your protein intake. This mixture of fuels is optimal for burning fat for a number of reasons. Firstly, protein has a high thermal effect which simply means it increases your metabolic rate; think of eating protein as a mini fat-burning workout.

Secondly, vegetables contain far fewer calories than rice, pasta and potatoes (a vegetable I know but a relatively calorie-dense one compared to greens etc). By swapping veg for other more calorie-dense foods, you can reduce your energy intake but still eat a similar volume of food.

Finally, reducing your carb intake limits insulin production. Insulin is necessary for shunting carbohydrates into your cells but also inhibits fat burning. By keeping insulin levels on the down low, you automatically set your fat cells to burn mode rather than store.

By eating this way, you don’t actually have to eat much less to enjoy easy and steady fat loss – no crash diet or fancy supplements required.

*As few as 50 years ago, most people ate clean as this was really the only way they COULD eat. There were no Franken-foods that were made in labs rather than grown on farms and sugar and salt were condiments rather than nutritional mainstays. Eating cleanly is a back-to-basics approach that worked all those years ago and will work today – so long as you stick to it!*
10) Take Your Walking to The Next Level

Walking and the fitness it develops can literally take you anywhere. Of course, you don't HAVE to push the envelope and take your walking to the next level but some of us LOVE a challenge and have a die-hard competitive streak. If that's you, this chapter is designed to give you a few ideas of ways you can challenge yourself to reach new heights of fitness. If, however, you don't have a competitive bone on your body – that's okay too. You can be safe in the knowledge that “normal” walking offers so many benefits that you really aren't missing out on much.

Before I discuss some potential walking challenges, it's worth discussing the benefits of going the extra mile (pun intended) with your walking. The main benefit is it gives you something to train for.

In fitness, there are two types of activity – exercise and training. Exercise is all about doing a particular activity for the health benefits, weight control and general fitness whereas training is all about improving fitness specifically for performance. In other words, if you walk for fun, health and enjoyment, you are exercising but if you are walking because you want to prepare your body for a specific task or challenge, such as a sponsored walk, then you are training.

Training can help keep you motivated by giving you focus. You gradually increase your walking mileage and speed with a view to preparing your body for the rigours of your intended challenge. Once you have (hopefully successfully) completed your challenge, you ease back on your training and gradually build back up as you work toward your next goal. Like an athlete training for successive Olympic Games, this ensures you reach greater and greater levels of fitness and performance.

So, now you know the difference between exercise and training, here are a few ideas of walking-related challenges that you might like to consider. One word of warning, make sure you are adequately prepared (trained) before you take on any such challenge and always give yourself a long enough lead in time to ensure you are fit and ready. Also, make sure you take it easy for the initial weeks after a challenge to give yourself time to recover. Going straight back into full training after completing a big challenge is a sure fire way to end up tired and sore.

1. **Do a sponsored walk**

   I remember doing lots of sponsored walks as a child – normally organized by my school or local scout group. Sponsored walks are a great way to get a workout while helping an individual or a group of people less fortunate than you. There are organized sponsored walks you can do or, alternatively, you could organize your own. As a keen walker, you should endeavour to make sure that the distance you have to walk represents a decent challenge. For example, if you know you can comfortably walk eight-miles, a 12-mile walk would be a good, challenging distance.

2. **Try a weekend hike**

   Weekend hikes provide a great way to see new sites and visit parts of the country you might not otherwise see. You can camp overnight or, if you prefer a less Spartan experience, stay in a hostel, hotel or inn. Most of your regular walks will be circular whereas a weekend hike will probably be from A to B. In other words, you will be walking for transport rather than simple exercise. Half of the fun of a weekend hike is planning your route and itinerary. If you are going to be carrying a backpack full of gear such as tents, food and water, make sure you do at least
some of your preparatory walks with a weight on your back so that, the first time you shoulder your rucksack, it isn’t too much of a shock. Finally, don’t try and set yourself too many miles to walk – give yourself time to stop and enjoy the places you are walking through. Don’t turn your hike into a military route march!

3. **Do a time trial**

Time trials are events in cycling where you attempt to cover a specific distance as fast as you possibly can and are basically a race against yourself. Pick a distance, say five-miles, and then set out with the express purpose of completing the distance as fast as you can. You can do short time trials or long time trials according to your fitness and the amount of time you have available. The Cooper three-mile walk test is a standardized time trial which will allow you to ascertain your current fitness levels and see how your performance stacks up against other people your own age. See the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Very poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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<th>Excellent</th>
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<td>41:00 - 37:31</td>
<td>37:30 - 33:00</td>
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<td>Females</td>
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<td>47:00 - 43:01</td>
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<td>39:30 - 35:00</td>
<td>&lt; 34:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>46:00 - 42:01</td>
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<td>&lt; 33:59</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40:30 - 36:00</td>
<td>&lt; 33:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>40:00 - 35:00</td>
<td>&lt; 34:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>51:00 - 46:31</td>
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<td>42:00 - 37:30</td>
<td>&lt; 37:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Males</td>
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<td>52:00 - 47:01</td>
<td>47:00 - 42:01</td>
<td>42:00 - 36:30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>54:00 - 49:01</td>
<td>49:00 - 44:01</td>
<td>44:00 - 39:00</td>
<td>&lt; 38:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Males</td>
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<td>55:00 - 50:01</td>
<td>50:00 - 45:01</td>
<td>45:00 - 39:00</td>
<td>&lt; 38:59</td>
</tr>
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<td>48:00 - 41:00</td>
<td>&lt; 40:59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
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<td>63:00 - 57:01</td>
<td>57:00 - 51:01</td>
<td>51:00 - 45:00</td>
<td>&lt; 44:59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Try a distance challenge**

Where time trials are all about speed, distance challenges are all about, well, distance. Distance walking has a long and rich history and it’s quite staggering how far some walking enthusiasts have walked. In the early days of your walking career ten-miles might seem like a daunting prospect but the current world record for non-stop walking (resting only one minute per four hours for shoe and sock changes and “calls of nature” is 412.08 miles! Needless to say, I don’t expect you to head out and attempt to break any world records but that doesn’t mean you can’t set some impressive personal records. With some training and determination, I see no reason why you couldn’t walk a half or even a full marathon – 13.1 and 26.2 miles respectively.

5. **Follow a long distance footpath**

If you want your walking to take you to new places, why not follow a footpath? There are over 1,300 designated long distance foot paths in the UK alone for you to explore that ([http://www.walkingenglishman.com/ldp/ldplist.htm](http://www.walkingenglishman.com/ldp/ldplist.htm)) vary significantly in length, location and terrain. Some can be done in a day while others may take many days or even weeks to complete and can be turned into walking holidays. Why not make a point to explore one of these paths each weekend; you don’t have to walk the entire length of course but are free to join and leave
Walk Yourself Fitter!
www.csxpro.com

the paths at a variety of points. Many other countries have similar walking networks so use the might of Google and look for paths in your country of residence or a country you would like to visit.

6. Try something crazy!
   If these challenges seem a little on the mundane side for you, why not use your imagination and come up with your own walking challenges? For example, in the Marines, we had to walk 30-miles over the rough terrain of Dartmoor while carrying 50-lbs of kit in under eight-hours. Or, if you really want to push yourself, you could see how many miles you can walk in 24-hours (the world record being 145 miles!). For a change of pace, try walking one-mile while carrying 100 kilos/220 pounds on your back. The sky is the limit when it comes to crazy challenges and while you might not break any records, you can be assured that you will get tremendous self satisfaction by pushing yourself to new, previously untapped, limits. Why not celebrate your birthday with a suitably demanding walking challenge? It’s a great way to give the two-fingered salute to old father time!

For my 40th birthday, I did 820 (a descending ladder or 40, 39, 38, 37 etc down to 1 repetition) burpees in a little under two hours and for my 42nd birthday I rowed the marathon distance of 42.1 kilometres. For my 45th birthday I did 105 deadlifts using 145kg in 45-minutes. For my 48th birthday, I’m planning to try the 24-hour walking challenge. Some call it madness but I call these annual challenges life affirming and also help keep me motivated from one year to the next.
11) Conclusion

Whether you are a walking beginner or a professional perambulator, walking has a lot to offer you. This unsung fitness hero is often overlooked in favour of exercises that are deemed to be more effective, more “hip”, sexier or more modern but as good as these other forms of exercise may be, walking trumps them all. Why? Simply because you were born to walk! Walking is the one of the most natural activities around and, as the saying goes; you have to use it or lose it. Make walking your fitness mainstay and I promise you that you will enjoy a level of health and fitness that lasts a lifetime.

Please share this e-book with anyone you think would enjoy it!

Good luck with your walking!

Patrick Dale
Cyprus
January 2014
11) About the Author

Born in Bristol, England, in 1968, Patrick Dale realized at a very early age that sports and fitness was "his thing" and has devoted almost all of his life to these pursuits.

After studying physical education in college, Patrick began working as a gym instructor and aerobics class teacher before quickly progressing to facility management. He was soon personal training a select group of clients before Personal Training became a recognized job title.

He took a five year break from the Health & Fitness industry to join the Royal Marine Commandos - one of the most elite fighting forces in the world. The Marines have a reputation for "training hard and fighting easy" and Patrick's high level of fitness was tested to the extreme during his service. Patrick saw active duty in many parts of the world including Northern Ireland.

Patrick left the Marines to resume his Health & Fitness career first as a fitness manager and then he began teaching other people how to become personal trainers and gym instructors. He now has his own training company in Cyprus called Solar Fitness Qualifications which provides professional certification courses for those wishing to follow in his footsteps in to the rewarding industry of Health & Fitness.

As an enthusiastic sportsman, Patrick has been involved with and competed in a wide variety of activities including athletics, rugby, rock climbing, weightlifting, bodybuilding, triathlon, martial arts, trampolining and gymnastics. He is currently training to compete in his first powerlifting competition.

His main areas of professional interests are strength and conditioning for improved sports performance, nutrition, fitness psychology and weight management as well as family health and fitness - an area he is very passionate about promoting. Believing that prevention is better than cure, he wants to help people of all ages to get the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and reduce their risk of the common chronic diseases associated with poor nutrition and inactivity. Patrick has written three books – ‘Military Fitness Training’, ‘Live Long, Live Strong’ and ‘No Gym? No Problem! The Home Workout Bible’ which are available from Amazon: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/Patrick-dale/e/B00B5HPLRO/ref=sr_nnt_srch_lnk_3?qid=1390912860&sr=1-3&tag=csxpedeb-21](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Patrick-dale/e/B00B5HPLRO/ref=sr_nnt_srch_lnk_3?qid=1390912860&sr=1-3&tag=csxpedeb-21)

When he isn’t researching and writing health & fitness related articles for various international magazines, lecturing, or writing books, Patrick enjoys spending his free time reading fiction, taking photographs, watching movies, cooking, walking his three great Danes and making the most of the sunny climate of Cyprus. He can be contacted at [patrickdale.militaryfitness@hotmail.com](mailto:patrickdale.militaryfitness@hotmail.com)