

# Health Benefits of Meditation

## Astonishing Benefits of Walking

Enjoy a better sex life, save money on medication, protect your brain and more—for free.

Walking is known to melt your thighs and perk up your bum. But its healthy resumé boasts some even more impressive accomplishments, from cash savings to increasing the odds of survival for breast cancer patients. A lot of attention has been paid to getting in 10,000 steps of walking, jogging, or running a day. A 40-minute walk will chip away half of those steps, and everyday activities can usually accumulate the other half. Here are eight reasons to take those extra steps and make walking a part of your healthy lifestyle:

# 1: It deflects diabetes. New research links brisk walking to a significant risk reduction for developing type 2 diabetes. Insulin resistance is a predictor of this disease, even in people with normal glucose levels. But a recent British study found that people with a family history of the disease who walked briskly, or performed some other type of moderate to vigorous activity on a routine basis, improved insulin sensitivity.

#2: It soups up your sex life. Sex and exercise go hand-in-hand. In a study of women between 45 and 55 years old, those who exercised, including brisk walking, reported not only greater sexual desire, but better sexual satisfaction, too.

#3: It saves you on gym costs. In this icky economy, people are cutting excesses, and that includes trips to the health club. In an American Heart Association survey, a quarter of the 1,000 people questioned had axed their gym memberships sometime in the previous six months. But no matter where you live, there's a place you can pound the pavement or trek a trail to experience the benefits of walking, and 150 minutes of moderate-intensity walking a week can help manage stress and prevent heart disease. Moderate walking equals an average of about 100 steps per minute. San Diego State University researchers suggest using a pedometer and aiming for 1,000 steps in 10 minutes, and working up to 3,000 steps in 30 minutes.

#4: It can get you off meds. Using data from the National Walkers' Health Study, including more than 32,000 women and 8,000 men, researchers found that those who took the longest weekly walks, not necessarily accumulated the most mileage per week, were more likely to use less medication. This shouldn't deter you from taking shorter walks more frequently throughout the week, but you should consider squeezing in a longer walk once a week, perhaps on the weekend when you have more spare time.

#5: It can help fade fibromyalgia pain. This chronic condition affects more than 4 percent of the population, and often involves pain, fatigue, and brain fog. A small study found that in women 32 to 70 years old, those who walked 60 minutes, performed light exercises, and stretched three times a week for 18 weeks reported significant improvements in walking and mental capacity, and were less tired and depressed.

#6: It helps you beat breast cancer. Women who walk regularly after being diagnosed with breast cancer have a 45 percent greater chance of survival than those who are inactive, according to a

study published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology. Yale researchers heading up the study also found that those who exercised in the year before being diagnosed were 30 percent more likely to survive, compared to women who didn't exercise leading up to their diagnosis.

#7: Strolling reduces stroke risk. Walking briskly for just 30 minutes, five days a week can significantly lower your risk of suffering a stroke, according to University of South Carolina researchers. After studying 46,000 men and 15,000 women over the course of 18 years, those with increased fitness levels associated with regular brisk walking had a 40 percent lower risk of suffering a stroke than those with the lowest fitness level.

#8: It can save your mind. Italian researchers enlisted 749 people suffering from memory problems in a study and measured their walking and other moderate activities, such as yard work. At the four-year follow-up, they found that those who expended the most energy walking had a 27 percent lower risk of developing dementia than the people who expended the least. This could be the result of physical activity's role in increasing blood flow to the brain.

In fact, research suggests that simply living in a more walkable community is associated with better cognition and memory.

Walking is a great form of exercise because (barring any physical disability) you don't need any specialized equipment to get started. But, if you haven't been active, take this advice from Sarah Lorge Butler, author of *Walk Your Butt Off*: "Before you start walking, answer this question truthfully," she says. "How active are you? If your major exercise is pushing buttons on a remote and a big workout is standing in line at the company cafeteria, you'll need to ease into this slowly."

Consider her three goals for starting a basic, four-week beginner walking plan:

- Walk regularly, aiming for at least 5 days a week. "Walking every day is even better and will help make walking a habit more quickly," says Butler."
- Build up to walking for 30 minutes, but start at 10 minutes in week one. 10 minutes might seem like nothing, but the point is to build the habit. Butler says, even though it's just 10 minutes, still set aside the time in your schedule. "Change into comfortable walking clothes if you can. Wear supportive sneakers," she says. "Even though it's a short bout of exercise, it's still exercise, and you need to treat it as such."
- Keep a good pace. "Speed is not the focus, but you should walk at a purposeful pace, as if you have somewhere to be. You can begin at a slower pace for 2 to 3 minutes to warm up," says Butler. "Slow your pace slightly for a minute or so at the end to cool down."

More info about **Health Benefits of Walking:**

<http://www.tescoliving.com/health-and-wellbeing/fitness/2013/october/top-10-health-benefits-of-walking-everyday>

Early Onset of Osteoarthritis: Risk Factors  
<http://www.realsimple.com/health/fitness-exercise/benefits-walking>