



Walk With Ease: The First Step to Better Health

Leader's Guide

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, participants will:

- Have a greater understanding of the benefits of walking as a form of physical activity
- Become acquainted with the *Walk With Ease* Program
- Gain techniques to develop a safe walking program

Materials Needed for the Lesson

- *Walk With Ease: The First Step to Better Health Class Coversheet*
- *Walk With Ease: The First Step to Better Health Evaluations*
- Instructor copies of the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern and Teaching Stretches for Walking
- The Arthritis Foundation's *Walk With Ease Participant's Book(s)* (optional)
- Registration information for a local in-person and/or self-directed *Walk With Ease Program* (optional)

Teaching Instructions

- Review information regarding the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern and Teaching Stretches for Walking. This information has been made available on the FCE Lesson Website with permission from The Arthritis Foundation.
- If time allows, read pages 1-5 in the Arthritis Foundation's *Walk With Ease Participant's Book*
- *Please complete and submit the *Walk With Ease: The First Step to Better Health Class Coversheet*.
- *Submit the completed *Walk With Ease: The First Step to Better Health Evaluations*. Individual county results will be provided to the FCH County Faculty by request.

** Note to FCH Faculty and Staff: If sufficient data is collected, a collective impact statement for this lesson would be created and those who provided data will be included as a collaborator.*

Introduction to Walking and the Benefits of Walking

Walking is one of the simplest, inexpensive and safest forms of physical activity for people of all ability levels. Walking does not require the purchase of special equipment or expensive gym membership. It is an activity that can be completed in your own time-frame by yourself or with walking partners. The intensity of your walk is controlled completely by you. Although walking is a simple form of physical activity, the benefits of walking are far from simple!

Today I will share with you the major benefits of walking as a form of physical activity and introduce you to the *Walk With Ease* Program. Lastly, techniques to develop your own safe walking program will be

shared and you will have the opportunity to practice five stretches that are practically beneficial to walkers.

There are a number of studies that support the benefits of walking. Today we will share a few of those benefits.

Improve Cardiovascular Health and Lower Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

The American Heart Association recommends aerobic exercise, such as walking, at a moderate to vigorous intensity for 30 minutes a day, five days a week, for overall cardiovascular health. To lower blood pressure and cholesterol, the American Heart Association recommends aerobic exercise, such as walking, at a moderate to vigorous intensity for 40 minutes a day, three to four days a week (American Heart Association, 2014). Do not worry if you can't walk 30 to 40 minutes all at one time – this is a goal to work towards. You can easily break up the 30 minutes into two or three segments of 10 to 15 minutes throughout a day. The same benefits are achieved if you walk your 30 minutes all at once, or in smaller segments over the course of the day!

Maintain Weight

Walking can assist in maintaining a healthy weight. In addition, walking for an extended period of time, more than 20 minutes a day, at a moderate intensity can assist with weight loss when coupled with an appropriate diet (Zeratsky, 2013).

Manage Pain

Walking is one of the safest forms of physical activity to assist pain management for those who have arthritis and other chronic health conditions, as walking reduces stiffness caused by many forms of arthritis while have relatively low impact on joints (Bernstein, 2014)

Improve Your Mood

There are a number of studies that show regular walking exercise is a great way to improve your mood and to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Research conducted by a professor at California State University showed a relationship between the number of steps taken in a day and self-reported mood and energy levels. The study concluded that the more participants walked during the day, the more energy they reported, in addition to improvements in overall mood, happiness and self-esteem (Gloady, 2006).

Increases Creativity

A recent study published by the American Psychological Association found that that walking increased creativity. They found that novel ideas were much more likely to be generated by those who walk, than those who remain inside at a desk. The benefit of walking for creativity was at its highest when study participants walked outdoors in a non-crowded area compared to those walking indoors (Oppezzo & Schwartz, 2014).

Introduction to Arthritis (optional)

(Instructor can ask audience) What part of the body do you think of when you hear the word “arthritis”?

Knees – hips – shoulders--elbows – these are all examples of joints, the parts of the body where two bones meet and move. The word “arthritis” is a medical term that literally means joint inflammation; but “arthritis” also refers to a group over one hundred different diseases. Arthritis affects not only joints but sometimes other parts of the body-- like the skin or the tissue around a joint.

Now let’s talk about some of the facts and figures of arthritis.

(Instructor can ask audience) Who can guess how many people in the United States actually have arthritis?

(Instructor gives answer) Right now, about 50 million Americans have been diagnosed with arthritis by a health care professional. So it’s not surprising that arthritis is the number one cause of disability and the second most frequently reported chronic condition in the United States (following only heart disease).

(Instructor can ask audience) Can anyone guess the normal age?

(Instructor provides answer) Arthritis is not something that only happens in older age groups. We know that it seems to be more common in people as they age. It affects over half of those ages 65 and up. You may be surprised to hear that most people with arthritis are younger than 65. Some of them are much younger than 65. Some of them are children!

With so many people affected, the total cost of arthritis in the U.S. – including medical care, lost wages and other expenses- is about 128 *billion dollars each year*

These numbers are expected to rise. We estimate that there will be 67 million Americans living with arthritis by the year 2030. That would be a total of 20% of the national population!

There is no single cause of arthritis. However, there are several things that could be connected with its development. Some of these things you can control, some of them you cannot. Some of the things you can’t control include genetic factors, your age, and unexpected joint injuries.

Let’s talk about the things that you **CAN** control. First on the list is weight. Putting extra weight on your joints can cause more problems than you think. We know that when people’s weight increases, their risk of arthritis increases too. Pain in the knees, hips, and back also increase as weight increases. Levels of disability rise as well.

A little bit of weight loss goes a long way, but losing weight is not a simple process. Regular physical activity, like taking walks during lunch, coupled with a wise diet can help you lose weight in a safe manner over time

Muscle weakness can also increase your chances of developing osteoarthritis. When the muscles that surround your joints are weak, the joint itself is not always held in the right position. A lack of physical activity also increases your chances of developing osteoarthritis. Staying active is very important and physical activity is often a treatment for many types of arthritis. Last on our list of things we CAN do to control osteoarthritis is joint injury. We can prevent joint injuries by protecting them during our activities.

It's never too late to start an active lifestyle!

When we talk about “physical activity” we are talking about any form of exercise or movement. Physical activity may include planned activity such as walking, running, basketball, or other sports. It may also include other daily activities such as household chores, yard work, and walking the dog, just to name a few.

Being physically active has benefits in almost every aspect of your life, including your mental well-being, your heart and lung health, and the strength of your bones. Physical activity is especially good for arthritis -- it is the arthritis pain reliever! Regular physical activity has been shown to decrease pain and inflammation, fatigue, and joint strain. It also can increase flexibility and muscle strength.

It is recommended that people with arthritis be moderately physically active for at least 30 minutes per day three or more days a week. Examples of moderate physical activity include walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, or bicycling on level terrain. Don't worry if you think you can't do 30 min, it doesn't have to be done all at once. You can spread it throughout your daily routine, such as swimming for ten minutes in the morning and then riding a bike for twenty minutes later that night or taking three walks that are each 10 minutes long.

It is important, however, that you check first with your physician before starting a new exercise program or making changes to an existing one. When you're ready to start a physical activity program, *Walk With Ease* is a great program to slowly introduce you to walking!

Introduction to Walk With Ease

The *Walk With Ease* Program was developed by the Arthritis Foundation, and research has shown that the program can help reduce pain, improve balance and walking pace, and improve strength and confidence (Nyrop et al., 2011; Bruno et al., 2006; Callahan et al., 2011). The *Walk With Ease* Program provides beneficial information for adults who are looking to increase physical activity and receive the benefits of regular physical activity. Therefore, the *Walk With Ease* Program is open to adults of all ability levels whether or not they have arthritis. The only requirement of the program is that participants should be able to be on their feet for 10 minutes without increased pain.

The objectives of the *Walk With Ease* Program are threefold:

- To promote education about successful physical activity for people with arthritis
- To promote education about arthritis self-management and walking safely and comfortably
- To encourage participant to continue their walking program and explore other exercise and self-management programs that deliver proven benefits for people with arthritis

(Arthritis Foundation, 1)

The *Walk With Ease* Program is offered as a series of in-person sessions or as a self-guided option.

In-Person Classes

The in-person *Walk With Ease* Program is comprised of 18 one-hour sessions. Sessions are held twice a week for a 9-week program or three times a week for a 6-week program. Each session includes:

- 5-minute informational mini-lectures, supported by the *Walk With Ease* Participant Book

- Warm up and cool downs including stretches and strengthening exercises
- 10-35 minute walking period
- Group problem-solving and sharing

Note to instructor: Insert local upcoming *Walk With Ease* Program information here if available

Self-Guided Program

There is a self-guided *Walk With Ease* Program option available. This is a great option for those who live in an area where an in-person *Walk With Ease* Program is not currently available or for those who have a scheduling conflict with the in-person *Walk With Ease* Program that is being offered in their area. Self-guided participants are provided with a *Walk With Ease* Participant Book to guide them through their walking program. In addition, participants receive emails to support them over the duration of the program. Information on how to register for the self-guided *Walk With Ease* Program is available on the handout.

Note to instructor: If you are knowledgeable about the *Walk With Ease* Program, pause for questions or provide participants with contact information of who they can talk to regarding questions about the program.

Note to instructor: If *Walk With Ease* books are available at this training, people may fill out a registration for the self-directed version of the program and take a book with them.

Techniques to Develop Safe Walking Program

The 2-Hour Pain Rule

It is normal when beginning a physical activity program to experience some soreness and/or discomfort as your body adapts to the activity. Most people experience muscle soreness in the 1 or 2 days following the activity. Over time and with continued physical activity, this soreness will decrease and may go away completely. People with conditions like arthritis may experience pain in their joints normally. It is important to be able to distinguish between the usual arthritis pain, soreness from starting a new exercise program, and pain caused by over use!

The 2-hour pain rule is:

If you have more pain two hours after you finish walking than before you started, you've overdone it. Cut back on your physical activity until you find a level that does not cause pain.

Note to instructor: you may want to repeat and rephrase this rule a few times, and emphasize that it is normal to feel soreness the day following exercise, but increased pain within 2-hours is an indication of overuse or exercising at too high of an intensity level.

If you have any questions or concerns about starting a new physical activity program that they should check with their medical provider.

The 5-step Walking Pattern

Regardless of your fitness ability it is important that you develop a walking routine that includes a warm up, cool down and stretches. The *Walk With Ease* Program follows a 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. We are going to review the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern today. I will first share each of the steps of the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern, then I will demonstrate the stretches and you will have the opportunity to join in.

1) Warm Up

It is important that muscles are warmed up prior to stretching. Once muscles have been warmed up, greater range of motion can be achieved to safely maximize the benefits of stretching. A warm up can either be a slow walk or marching in place for 3 to 4 minutes.

2) Gently Stretch

The *Walk With Ease* Program promotes five stretches (additional stretches are available) that stretch the major muscle groups used for walking. The major muscle groups used for walking include the calves, hamstrings, quadriceps, hip flexors and iliotibial bands.

Note to instructor: Point to muscle groups on your body or use photos to showcase location of the major muscle groups used for walking.

3) Walk

There are a number of items to consider in developing your own walking program from the pace and intensity you walk at, to the selection of your walking route. The *Walk With Ease* Program will cover these topics, as well as many others, in detail.

In general, the Walk With Ease program encourages participants to walk at a moderate pace. A good way to check your pace is to see if you can talk while you are walking. If you are walking at a moderate intensity level, you should be able to hold a normal conversation with someone. This is called the “talk-test.” If you are having trouble speaking, or gasping for air, walk a little slower until you can speak normally. On the other hand, you shouldn’t be able to sing loudly and with gusto - you want to be doing some work!

The Walk with Ease program recommends the “talk-test” but will go over other methods that you could use to monitor your intensity level.

4) Cool Down

For the last 3 to 5 minutes of your walk, you should slow your walking pace to a stroll. A cool down allows your heart rate to lower gradually and decreases the chance of dizziness and light headedness after a walk.

5) Gently Stretch (Again) Stretching after you walk can help reduce your pain and stiffness, and increases your flexibility and range of motion. It can be tempting to skip these stretches as you go back to your daily activities, but this is one of the most important parts of ensuring you get the most benefit from your physical activity program.

Note to instructor: Lead your group through at least the first two steps of the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. Detailed directions for each of the five stretches can be found on the FCE website. Videos of the stretches are available on the Arthritis Foundation's Website.

Tips for Success

The *Walk With Ease* Program gradually introduces a walking routine. Whether you can now walk for 5 minutes or 30, you will start at a pace and distance that's comfortable for you and gradually improve over time. *Walk With Ease* will help you learn how to set realistic goals, track your progress, and provide you with tips for how handle missed walks, pain, and other barriers.

Here are some things that have been shown to help people stick with physical activity:

- Do it with a friend, or a pet! Walking with another person can help you stay motivated and can be more interesting!
- Write notes to yourself about techniques that you find helpful in staying motivated, or overcoming barriers. Place them where you will see them – on your bathroom mirror, the dashboard of your car, your computer monitor, your gym bag, or have a friend or family member remind you. These kinds of things may seem simple or silly, but research proves they help.
- Reward yourself!
- Be kind to yourself if you miss a day or don't make your goals. It is tough to find time for everything we want to do, and it is hard to start a new routine. Remember that even a little physical activity is better than none!
- Listen to music, a podcast, or the radio when you walk.

Ask Participants to discuss: What are some techniques that have worked for you in the past?

Note to instructor: You may encourage participants to meet each other and exchange contact information if they are interested in finding a walking buddy

Resources

Arthritis Foundation: <http://www.arthritis.org/>

Walk With Ease Stretching Videos: <http://www.arthritistoday.org/what-you-can-do/staying-active/exercise-videos/walk-with-ease-exercises/>

References

- Altpeter, M., Callahan L.F., Morse M.L., Meier, A., Schoster, B., Buysse, K., . Goepfinger, J. (2009). *Arthritis foundation walk with ease program: Leader's guide*. Atlanta, GA: Arthritis Foundation.
- American Heart Association. (2014). American heart association recommendations for physical activity in adults. Retrieved from http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/FitnessBasics/American-Heart-Association-Recommendations-for-Physical-Activity-in-Adults_UCM_307976_Article.jsp#
- Arthritis Foundation. (2010). *Walk With Ease*. Atlanta, GA: Arthritis Foundation.
- Bruno, M., Cummins, S., Guadiano, L., Stoos, J., & Blanpied, P. (2006). Effectiveness of two arthritis foundation programs: Walk with ease, and you can break the pain cycle. *Clin. Interv. Aging*. 1(3):295-306.
- Callahan, L. F., Shreffler, J.H., Altpeter, M., Schoster, B., Hootman, J., Houenou, L. O., . Schwartz, T. A. (2011). Evaluation of group and self-directed formats of the arthritis foundation's walk with ease program. *Arthritis Care Res*. 63(8):1098-1107.
- Gloady, R. (2006). Walk your way to more energy. *Inside USCLB*. 58(4). Retrieved from http://www.csulb.edu/misc/inside/archives/vol_58_no_4/1.htm
- Nyrop, K. A., Charnock, B. L., Martin, K.R., Lias, J., Altpeter, M., & Callahan, L. F. (2011). Effect of a six-week walking program on work place activity limitations among adults with arthritis. *Arthritis Care Res*. 63(12):1773-1776.
- Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014). Give your Ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 40(4), 1142-1152.
- Bernstein, S. (2014). Living with chronic pain. *Arthritis Foundation*, 1-3. Retrieved from <http://www.arthritistoday.org/about-arthritis/arthritis-pain/chronic-pain/chronic-pain-cmt.php>
- Zeratsky, K. (2013). Can I lose weight if my only exercise is walking? *Mayo Clinic Healthy Lifestyle*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/weight-loss/expert-answers/walking/faq-20058345>



Teaching Stretches for Walking Leader's Guide Appendix A

After the participants have warmed up, they are ready for the stretches.

Hints about Stretching

- Remember not to touch participants if you are helping them stretch
- If a participant has trouble with balance, s/he can do the seated versions of the stretches instead of standing
- Participants should stretch gently/smoothly until they feel tension; then hold that position for 30 seconds on each side (no bouncing)
- Remind participants not to hold their breath

Note: The Stretching exercises are included in Appendix B of the Workbook and the Leader's Guide.
Paraphrase the following

The next step of the Walking Pattern is stretching. Before we talk about the stretches, here are a few hints for both you and the participants:

- Remember not to touch participants if you're helping them stretch. If participants have any concern at all about balance, they should be encouraged to do the seated version of the stretch. If participants fall, you may not assist them in getting up again. If seating is not available at the site where you're holding your class, participants who have trouble with balance should not do the exercises. Instead, urge these participants to practice doing the seated exercises at home.
- Participants should stretch gently and smoothly until they feel tension and then hold that position (no bouncing) for 30 seconds on each side. You should remind participants not to hold their breath while doing this.

Stretches before Walking

Paraphrase the following:

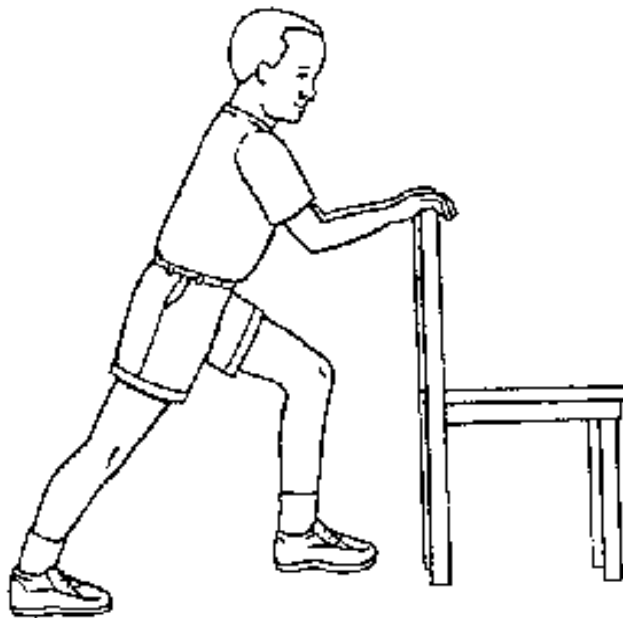
The four key stretches that participants should do before walking are:

- Straight leg calf stretch
- Hamstring stretch
- Hip flexor/ Quadriceps stretch
- Iliotibial Band stretch

We'll go through these one by one and also explain the sitting variations for participants with balance issues.

1. Straight leg calf stretch

- Gently lean against a wall, tree, or chair for support.
- Keep your head up and spine straight.
- Keep your feet about a hip width apart.
- Place right foot back and keep toes facing forward.
- Slightly bend the knee of the left leg, bringing it no further forward than your toes.
- Press the heel of your right foot toward the ground until you feel a stretch down the back of your calf.
- Hold for 30 seconds and then repeat with the other leg.
- Bring your right foot back up until you're standing on both feet, hip width apart.
- Now, put your left foot back with your toes facing forward and bend your right knee, bringing it no further forward than your toes.
- Push your left heel toward the floor until you feel a stretch down the back of your calf.
- Hold for 30 seconds
- Stand again with your legs together.



Straight Leg Calf Stretch

2. Hamstring Stretch

Paraphrase the following:

Participants may choose to do the hamstring stretch standing or sitting, depending on how they are most comfortable.

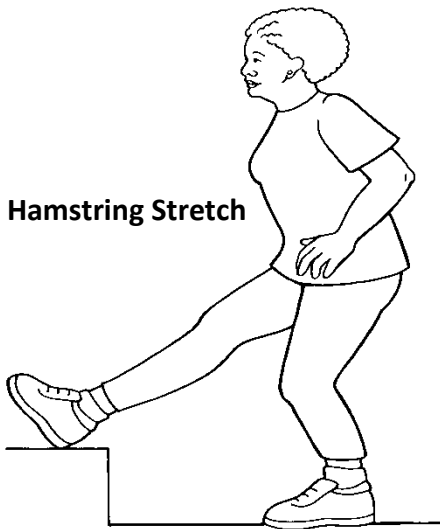
Standing hamstring stretch, using a step

- Stand with your feet about a hip width apart.
- Holding onto a supportive railing or wall, place right leg on a slightly raised surface, like a step or a curb.
- Keep hips facing forward.
- Slowly bend left knee until feeling a mild tension or stretch on the back of the right thigh.
- Hold for 30 seconds and then repeat with the other leg.

Seated hamstring stretch using a bench, chair, or other low firm surface

- Sit toward the edge of your chair or bench.
- Stretch out right leg with your toes pointing up.
- Keep left foot flat on the ground, and press gently on left thigh with both hands (This keeps you from slumping).
- Keep the back straight and then gently lean forward from the hips until feeling a stretch in the back of the right thigh.
- Pull the foot back, pointing toes up.
- Participants may feel a stretch by just straightening up their back.
- Hold for 30 seconds and then repeat with the other leg.

Standing Hamstring Stretch



Seated Hamstring Stretch



3. Hip Flexor/Quadricep Stretch

Paraphrase the following:

The hip flexor stretch may also be done standing or sitting, depending on how participants are most comfortable.

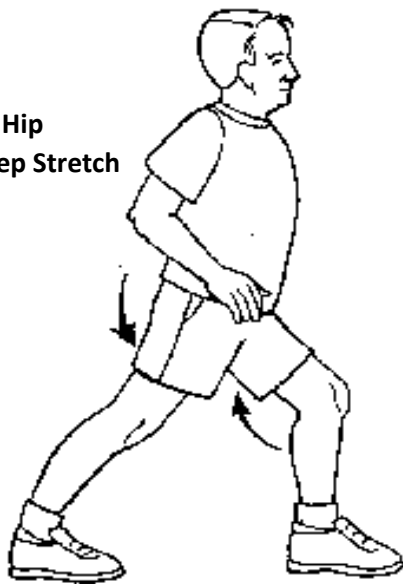
Standing hip flexor/quadricep stretch

- Stand up straight with your feet hip width apart.
- Place the left foot in front of the right foot. Put your right leg straight back, and bend your left knee just a little—not further than the end of your toes.
- Tuck the buttocks tightly under the hips.
- Participants will feel a stretch on the front of their right hip and upper thigh.
- Hold for 30 seconds and then repeat with the other leg.

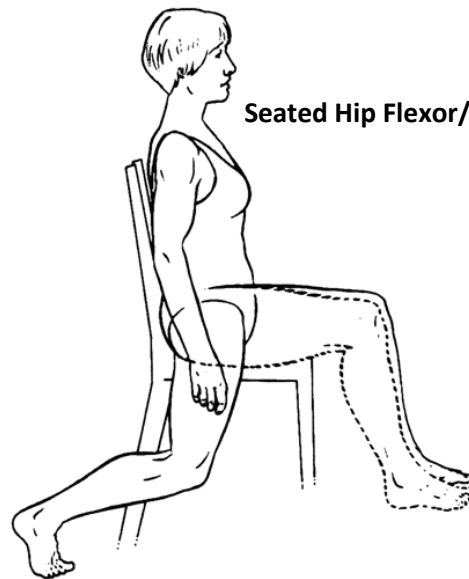
Seated hip flexor/quadricep stretch

- Sit on the side of a stable chair, bench, or other low firm surface.
- Gently move your right leg straight back and behind you beside the chair (not under it).
- Tuck the buttocks tightly under the hips.
- Be sure to sit up straight.
- You will feel a stretch on the front of your right hip and upper thigh.
- Hold for 30 seconds
- Slide to the opposite side of the chair.
- Repeat with the other leg.

**Standing Hip
Flexor/Quadricep Stretch**



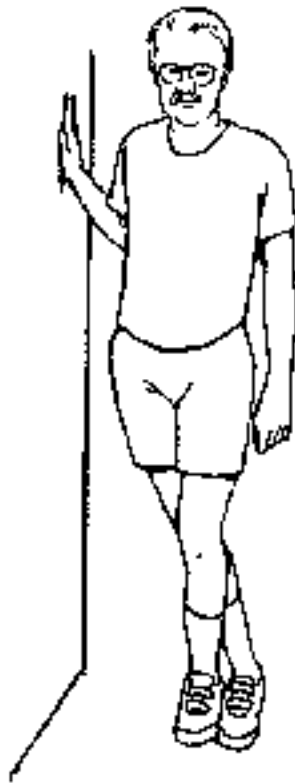
Seated Hip Flexor/Quadricep Stretch



4. Iliotibial band stretch leaning into a wall

- Stand up straight beside and about a foot away from the wall (or other support) with your right side nearest the wall.
- Keep your knees a little bent.
- Put your hand on the wall (or other support).
- Cross your left leg over, but don't put any weight on it—it's just for balance. All your weight is on your right leg. Use the right arm against the wall for support.
- Do "the bump"—push your right hip toward the wall until you feel a stretch on the outside of that hip. If you aren't feeling the stretch, come out a little farther from the wall and try again.
- Don't lean forward.
- Hold for 30 seconds, then turn around and repeat on the other side.
- In the same position, using the wall for support and crossing your right leg in front of your left, do "the bump" with your left hip until you feel a stretch on the outside.
- Hold it for 30 seconds.
- Stand up straight again.

Iliotibial Band Stretch





Implementing the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern Appendix B

Leader's note: Be sure to review and practice each of the exercises before you teach this session so that you can demonstrate how to do them.

PARAPHRASE the following:

Since our first session, we've been doing a warm-up, stretch, walk, cool-down, and final stretch afterwards. These five activities are actually called the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. I'm going to describe these activities in more detail because it's important that you be able to do the pattern on your own. Appendix B of the workbook contains the approved stretching and strengthening exercises that are part of the pattern.

Leader's note: It may be helpful to show the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern Poster while you review each step. You can also remind them that all of this information is in Chapter 5 of their workbook, so they can review it later.

Step 1: Warm up

This step should take 3 to 5 minutes. Warming up is very important before active exercise. It prepares you physically by warming up muscles and preparing you for exercise, elevating temperature and increasing blood flow. Warming up also prepares you mentally by helping you focus and get energized for the moderate walk to come. To warm up, all you need to do is

Stroll or walk at a slow pace for about three to five minutes. Alternatively, you can march in place or walk around your house for the warm-up time.

Step 2: Gently stretch

This step should take 4 to 5 minutes. Doing leg and body stretches will help prevent shin pain, sore muscles and other injuries, especially as you go for longer walks. Be sure to do each stretch with both your right and left sides. Hold each stretch for 30 seconds on each side and do not bounce. Don't hold your breath

Leader's note: DEMONSTRATE the following:

- Straight leg calf stretch
- Standing and seated hamstring stretch (for participants with balance problems)
- Stand and seated hip flexor and quadriceps stretch
- Iliotibial band stretch
- Other stretches (included in Appendix B of the workbook)

Step 3: Walk

This step will vary depending on your walking capacity. It may be 5 to 30 minutes or more.

This is the “cardiovascular” part of your walk. Follow these guidelines:

- Pick up the pace. Gradually pick up your pace until you are walking at a moderate pace. Walk as if you have somewhere to go!
- Increase your time. To gradually increase your time, you can follow the suggested walking progression chart in Chapter 5 as a guideline. If you are a beginner, start by walking a total of 10 minutes: a three-to-five minute faster segment surrounded by your warm-up and cool-down strolls. If you already can walk for longer than 10 minutes at a time, enter the chart at your current level of duration and go from there.
- Monitor for intensity. Use the talk test to monitor yourself: you should still be able to carry on a conversation even when walking at a faster pace. If you can't talk without a lot of huffing and puffing or other discomfort, your pace is too fast; slow down to a more comfortable level.
- Check your heart rate. As you become more fit (able to walk for longer times or at a faster pace or intensity), be sure to keep your heart rate within the moderate intensity level. Monitor yourself at least occasionally by using the perceived exertion scale or heart rate scale described in Chapter 5, and that we'll cover in a little while. These scales help you measure how much your body is working as you exercise.
- Your numbers should remain in the moderate ranges: from 4 to 7 on the perceived exertion scale.
- If you have osteoarthritis, stay within the 50 to 70% range for your age level on the heart rate scale.
- If you have rheumatoid arthritis, try to stay within the 60 to 85% range for your age level on the heart rate scale.
- Pay attention to your body mechanics. Body mechanics means good posture and efficient body movements. Use good body mechanics when you're walking. Try to do all of the techniques I just mentioned to help you walk safely and comfortably.
- Watch out for making common walking errors. Avoid common walking “errors” such as overstriding, which means taking steps that are too long for comfort, or leaning. The workbook talks about this in more detail.

Step 4: Cool down

This step should take about 3 to 5 minutes. At the end of your walk, slow your pace to a stroll until your heart rate has returned to your pre-walk level.

Please don't skip this, no matter how hurried you might be. A gradual cool-down allows your body to “down-shift” from high gear to a lower gear and finally back to the low gear of everyday movement.

Cooling down lets your heart rate lower gradually and prevents your blood from pooling in your legs, which can cause light headedness, dizziness, or even fainting.

To cool down, gradually slow your walking pace to a stroll during the last 3 to 5 minutes of your walk. You should be at no more than a fairly light intensity level. (If you measure your intensity, this level would be 3 or less on the perceived exertion scale, or 10 to 14 beats on the 10-second heart rate scale.)

Step 5: Gently stretch again

This step should take 7 to 9 minutes. This is the most neglected part of a good walking program. Stretching after exercise helps you prevent soreness, increase flexibility, and maintain range of motion.

Repeat the same stretches you did during your warm-up but hold each stretch for 45 seconds on each side. Do not bounce, and remember to breathe! Appendix B of your workbook has exercise directions and pictures.

Leader's note: Some final comments about the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern.

Ideally, go through the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern each time you walk, even if you walk in short 10-minute sessions several times during the day. When your time is limited, stretch before and after walking at least one time each day you walk; the first time you walk during the day might make the most sense.

ASK participants if they have any questions about the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. REMIND them they can review it in Chapter 5 of their workbook.