

WALK YOUR WAY TO GREAT HEALTH!

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Looking for a way to start your journey to healthy living? It starts with the first step.

I am a believer in the power of walking, and not only because of the research. You don't have to be a runner to be healthy. Perhaps you aren't into running, or have had an injury and can't run, that's OK, walking is a simple and easy activity. Studies show that a daily brisk walk can help lower your risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Walking can reduce belly fat, strengthen your muscles and bones, improve balance and coordination, increase energy levels and improve mood.

As a busy physician and mother, raising a family and building my Obstetric and Gynecology practice were my first priorities, and for many years, I made excuses for not finding the time to exercise. Recently, I was challenged by a friend to join an interval walking group. This was a turning point for me. I have personally realized the benefits of regular walking and I have never felt better!

Walking with a group, gave me a sense of camaraderie and I look forward to my evening walks with my new friends. I found that I had more energy, lost weight, and found myself falling asleep faster, and I feel more rested in the morning. I also believe that accomplishing this goal has given me the incentive to accomplish other goals. I can't say that it was always easy and that some days I was busy and tired; on those days I did not feel like going for a walk. But at the end of the day, I began to realize that I felt better knowing I had fit my walk into my day.

I recommend walking to most of my patients because its easy to do, requires nothing but a pair of tennis shoes and has wonderful physical and emotional benefits. Here are a few tips that I give to my patients:

It's OK to start out slowly. The important thing is to just get started. Set realistic goals, and add a few additional minutes per day. As a general goal, aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day. If you can't set aside 30 minutes at first, break up the activity into several 10-minute sessions throughout the day. Don't forget to warm up by walking slowly at first and stretch your muscles. Also, remember to cool down at the end of your walk.

Make walking enjoyable. I enjoy my walking group, but I sometimes I also like walk in solitude because it gives me time to think. Studies have shown that walking sparks creativity. You will find what works best for you. If you don't enjoy walking alone, ask a friend to walk with you, join a walking group or a health club. You might like listening to music while you walk. I found an awesome walking play list that I listen to on my iphone!

I encourage you to make a brisk walk part of your daily routine and you will be rewarded with plenty of benefits!