If you are just starting to exercise, you should always start slowly and have your physician’s approval to begin an exercise program. You can choose a goal of time spent walking or distance to help you achieve health and fitness goals.

**Motivational Tip**
Small habits repeated daily can go a long way!

If you are just starting to exercise, you should always start slowly and have your physician’s approval to begin an exercise program. You can choose a goal of time spent walking or distance to help you achieve health and fitness goals.

**Setting a Goal**
When setting a goal, use the SMART goal formula below.

- **Specific**: Determine exactly the behavior you want to change.
- **Measurable**: Set a goal that you can assess.
- **Attainable**: Set yourself up for success by making an achievable goal.
- **Realistic**: Your goal should be something that is meaningful to you and a small stretch, not a leap.
- **Timely**: Include a timeframe.

Increasing mileage gradually is important to avoid injury. You may decide to walk five miles a week for a month, and then increase to six miles for another month.

**Tracking Progress**
Staying motivated to be physically active can make a difference between an active and sedentary lifestyle. A pedometer or other device that tracks your steps, distance, and heart rate can help you be successful. Keep track of your progress by using fitness hardware such as a pedometer, utilizing a fitness app, or journaling about your workouts.

**Socialization While Exercising**
Studies have shown that social support from your family and friends improves your ability to stick with an exercise program. Friends can offer encouragement and provide accountability. Here are some tips to add socialization into your exercise routine:
- **Walk with a friend.**
  When you are walking with a buddy, you may walk longer or faster than you would by yourself.
- **Sign up for charity walks.** A charity walk has a designated distance. A sense of purpose and walking with others will help you stay motivated to walk longer than you would on your own.
- **Sign up for a virtual walk club.** These clubs count all the members walking and add the total together for a distance challenge, such as "Everybody Walk Across Pennsylvania" offered by Penn State Extension.
- **Make it a tradition to take a family walk after dinner.**

**Types of Walking**
Instead of just taking a stroll, try brisk walking or race walking. To start race walking, take faster steps. Pump your arms (but not so much that it is exhausting). Step to a cadence; count "1, 2, 3, 4" as you step and repeat.

**Tips to Add Distance**
If you know you are having trouble achieving 10,000 steps daily, add small walks to increase mileage or steps throughout the day. Try parking farther away.
Walking Goal Planner
Use the table below to create your own customized walking plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
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</table>

from stores when running errands. When grocery shopping, make extra laps around the store.

Walk while you are on the phone at home (do this with caution—distracted walking can be dangerous).

**Beginner Walking Schedule**

Below is a sample walking plan. This plan is appropriate for someone who is just beginning to walk for exercise and has the goal to complete a 5K (3.1 miles).

**Week 1:** Walk 15 minutes per day five days this week.

**Week 2:** Walk 20 minutes per day five days this week.

**Week 3:** Walk 25 minutes per day five days this week.

**Week 4:** Walk 25 minutes per day at a faster pace five days this week.

**Week 5:** Walk 30 minutes for four days this week. For the fifth day, walk 40 minutes.

**Week 6:** Walk 30 minutes for four days this week. For the fifth day, walk 45 minutes.

**Week 7:** Walk 30 minutes for four days this week. For the fifth day, walk 60 minutes.

**Week 8:** Walk 30 minutes for four days this week. For the fifth day, walk 60 minutes.

**Week 9:** Add interval walking. Walk for 30 minutes for four days this week. Walk as fast as you can for 30 seconds, then walk slowly for two minutes, and repeat as you are able. For the fifth day, walk 60 minutes at an easy pace.

**Sources**

