

Walking...the best fitness program available.

Daylight savings time is here, and along with the lighter evenings comes our renewed motivation to go out for those evening walks after dinner. Walking is truly the perfect exercise – it can be used as a fitness program to strengthen your heart, bones and muscles, to help control your weight, to improve your mood and combat depression, to reduce stress and calm your mind or for the social joy of walking with a friend or in a group.

If you want to walk off some of that extra winter weight, you'll need to walk at a moderate pace for at least 30 – 60 minutes, each day. If you really want to burn calories, you need to pick up the pace. Try speeding up your walking to a mile in 13 minutes or less, and you'll start burning more calories per mile. Walking an hour a day has been proven to burn stored fat, build muscle to speed your metabolism, and cut your risk of heart disease, breast cancer, colon cancer, diabetes and stroke. Isn't it time to work 1-hour walks into your busy lifestyle?

Equipment is easy, but you definitely need to invest in a good pair of runners. The best shoe for you is the one that fits **you** the best, with proper support, flexibility and cushioning. Shoe manufacturers are putting the best design and technology into running shoe styles, whereas walking shoes are designed for “looks”. Go for comfort and function over style.

Proper technique... When walkers try to walk faster, a natural inclination is to lengthen your stride in front, reaching out further with your forward foot, and striking hard with the feet. Your shins hurt and you really don't get any faster. All of the power of your walk comes from pushing with the back leg and foot. If you are trying to walk fast, concentrate on taking shorter, quicker steps. Then think of really rolling through your step with your back foot and leg, getting a good push off. The result will be faster feet and lengthening your stride where it does you some good - in back.

Grab a friend, find a regular time of day that works, put on your runners and start walking this spring!