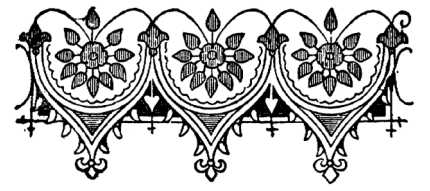


# Health & Wellness



## Walking is Man's Best Medicine —Hippocrates



Dr. Kate Thomsen and Silky

Too bad we don't take advantage of this inexpensive, extensively researched, widely available strategy with such extensive health benefits.

- Only 1 in 4 adults fully meets the physical activity guidelines recommended by the CDC.
- Inadequate physical activity costs America \$117 billion in annual health care costs.
- 110,000 premature deaths per year could be prevented if adults were more physically active

The CDC Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends:

- Adults should get weekly:
- 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity (30 minutes 5 x/ week), OR
  - 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, OR
  - An equivalent combination

Children and adolescents should be active for at least 60 minutes every day

So what's the evidence that you should drop what you are doing right now and get out there and walk?

*Walk and be happy, walk and be healthy. —Charles Dickens*

The "Blue Zones" refers to regions of the world with the highest concentration of centenarians (individuals living over 100 years old). Of the 9 secrets to their longevity, # 5 is "Incorporate natural movement instead of going to the gym." I have nothing against going to the gym but, it appears that most Americans are not incorporating enough

natural movement into their day. Walking and other low to moderate intensity physical activities contribute significantly to longevity and overall improved health. Regular physical activity is associated with reduced risk or reduced severity of adverse outcomes of: cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, various cancers, osteoarthritis, and infectious diseases.

*Walking is the best possible exercise. Habituate yourself to walk very far.*  
—Thomas Jefferson

Research has shown that all types of exercise can exert influence on the cellular and molecular mechanisms of aging. Exercise can:

- Promote DNA repair and maintenance
- Lessen oxidative stress and improve antioxidant function
- Reduce low grade inflammation from accumulation of old senescent cells ("inflammaging")
- Balance the sensing of nutrient availability with energy levels towards homeostasis in cells
- Improve mitochondrial function (the "power-houses of the cells")
- Support cell and tissue regeneration and maintain functionality of stem cells
- Influence the epigenetic regulation of the aging process – slowing biological aging

*An early morning walk is a blessing for the whole day.*  
—Henry David Thoreau

Walking has been shown to increase aerobic fitness, decrease body weight, body mass index (BMI), and percent body fat in adults. It has also been shown to lower blood sugar (specifically the HgA1c, the 3 month blood sugar average.) Regular exercise, including walking, also promotes endothelial health. The endothelium is the lining of your blood vessels and plays a key role in regulating blood pressure, providing a barrier (e.g., blood-brain barrier), and

preventing plaque and blood clot formation. So walking is a strategy for lowering the risk of atherosclerosis (stroke, coronary artery disease, and peripheral artery disease) and lowering the risk of small blood vessel disease (damage to the heart, brain, kidneys and skeletal muscle).

*All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking.*  
—Friedrich Nietzsche

Studies looking at the effect of walking on lowering risk for cognitive decline, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease have been mixed. It appears to take more (a higher dose) of exercise to reduce this risk. Both increased duration (at least 4000 – 10,000 steps per day) and a faster pace had a beneficial effect on cognitive health in the aging brain.

Having a regular walking habit also lowers the risk of type 2 diabetes in a dose-response relationship. Research has shown that walking between 4500 to 8000 steps per day showed increasingly impressive lowered risk and brisk walking appears to be more beneficial than slow or regular walking.

The same is true of all cause mortality. Daily walking has been shown to be associated with lowered all cause mortality with increasing duration of walking (4400 – 10,000 step per day) and brisk walking (over 100 steps per minute/moderate physical activity) associated with the highest reduction of risk.

*Walking gets the feet moving, the blood moving, the mind moving. And movement is life.*  
—Carrie Latet

Studies have shown that physical activity is associated with a 10 – 20% reduced risk of being diagnosed with these cancers: bladder, breast, colon, uterine, esophageal, kidney and stomach. Some studies have also shown individuals diagnosed with breast, colorectal and prostate cancer participating in regular physical activity to have improved survival.

Brisk walking is associated with reduced risk of respiratory diseases and COPD and daily walking lowers pneumonia-

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**Physical Activity**—any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure and includes exercise as well as usual occupational and/or domestic activity

**Exercise**—intentional physical activity (aerobic training, high intensity interval training, resistance training)

**Low-intensity physical activity**—includes light walking, stretching, beginner's yoga (you can sing a song while doing this)

**Moderate intensity physical activity**—includes brisk walking (100 or more steps per minute), biking, swimming, mowing the lawn (you can talk to someone but you can't sing)

**Vigorous physical activity**—includes running, swimming, heavy yard work, aerobic dancing (you can't say more than a few words without taking a breath)

Search:

- Exercise intensity: How to measure it - Mayo Clinic
- General Physical Activities Defined by Level of Intensity (cdc.gov)
- Target Heart Rate Calculator (calculatorsoup.com)



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Additional articles on holistic health topics can be found on the website

related mortality in older men and women.

*If you are in a bad mood, go for a walk. If you are still in a bad mood, go for another walk. — Hippocrates*

Increased physical activity in the daytime and a moderate-intensity walking program have both been shown to increase sleep quality and duration in midlife women.

*Walking is good for solving problems – it's like feet are little psychiatrists.*  
—Terri Guillemets

Walking has benefits for emotional and psychological well-being. It has been found to reduce symptoms of depression, improve mood state and boost creative inspiration. Walking, as compared to sitting, has been shown to increase creative output by 60%.

*In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks.*  
—John Muir

You can add health benefits by walking in nature – which I highly recommend!! No cell phone, no ear buds, just admiring the wonder of nature. As you take in the sights and sounds of the natural world, you can breathe in the terpenes

released by the evergreen trees. These biologic volatile organic chemicals making up the forest aerosols are essential to the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku (forest bathing). Terpenes have a broad range of beneficial health effects: anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor-igenic, neuroprotective, and immune-boosting. WOW! And so far, deep breathing terpenes in the forest is free!!

All these benefits!!! Let's get walking...

*It's your road and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you. —Rumi*

**Dr. Kate Thomsen's office for holistic health care is located in Pennington, NJ. She is trained in Family Medicine, and Board Certified in Integrative Medicine. She is an Institute for Functional Medicine Certified Practitioner. She has been practicing Functional Medicine for 26 years. For more information see [www.drkatethomsen.com](http://www.drkatethomsen.com) or call the office at 609-818-9700.**