



Walk this way – or any way – to better health on National Walking Day

The American Heart Association cites research showing the health benefits of regular walking and the importance of safe walking spaces in communities

For immediate release

DALLAS, April 5, 2022 — Get moving for National Walking Day on Wednesday, April 6th! Whether you're taking a leisurely stroll through your neighborhood or a power-walk in the park, the American Heart Association says taking part in [physical activity](#) is one of the best ways to manage stress, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and boost your mood. Established by the American Heart Association and celebrated on the first Wednesday in April, National Walking Day is a day take a walk, move, dance...do whatever works to get you moving and help you kick-off a commitment to a lifetime of healthy living.

Improved technology and the growing popularity of fitness applications, electronic wearables and step counters have made counting steps an easy way to count health benefits, as noted through a growing body of scientific research. A [study](#) presented at the American Heart Association's Epidemiology, Prevention, Lifestyle & Cardiometabolic Health Conference 2021 (EPI), found that

- Study participants who took more steps in short spurts lived longer, regardless of how many steps they had in longer, uninterrupted bouts. The benefits leveled off at about 4,500 steps a day in short spurts.
- Compared to no daily steps, each initial increase of 1,000 steps a day was associated with a 28% decrease in death during the follow-up period.
- A 32% decrease in death was noted in participants who took more than 2,000 steps daily in uninterrupted bouts.

Middle-aged people who walked the most steps-per-day had a 43% lower risk of diabetes and a 31% lower risk of high blood pressure, compared to those with the fewest steps, according to [research](#) presented at the Association's 2020 EPI Conference. For women in the study, each 1,000-step interval resulted in a 13% lower risk of obesity, and those with the highest step count were 61% less likely to have obesity, compared to women who walked the least.

People who took at least 7,000 steps a day had a 50% to 70% lower risk of dying compared with people who took fewer than 7,000 steps a day, according to a [study](#) published in September in the journal JAMA Open Network. Researchers found that a higher daily step count (over 10,000 steps) lowered the risk of premature death from any cause among Black and white middle-aged women and men.

[“Walking](#) is a great way to improve your health and your mental outlook, and it doesn’t take a lot of expensive sporting equipment to do it. Put on a good pair of shoes and grab a water bottle and you’re ready to go,” said Donna K. Arnett, M.S.P.H., Ph.D., B.S.N., a past president of the American Heart Association (2012-2013) and the dean and a professor in the department of epidemiology of the University of Kentucky College of Public Health in Lexington. “It doesn’t matter how fast or how far you walk, the important thing is to get moving. Counting steps doesn’t have to be part of a structured exercise program. Increasing your everyday activity, like parking slightly further from your destination, doing some extra housework or yardwork and even [walking your dog](#) can all add up to more steps and better health.”

The American Heart Association [recommends](#) at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. You can knock that out in just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. And every minute of moderate to vigorous activity counts toward your goal.

Arnett points out that walking indoors at home, in a gym or even a mall can be easy ways to get beneficial physical activity. However, [research](#) indicates that being outdoors in areas rich with trees, shrubs and grass (i.e., a higher level of greenness) may help reduce the risk of dying from heart disease.

“Unfortunately, many people do not have access to safe walking trails or adequate green space. The American Heart Association continues to [advocate for policy changes](#) that make it easier for people to have access to safe places to walk, exercise and play, as well as sustainable transportation options that integrate walking, bicycling and wheelchair use,” Arnett said. “The easier it is for people to engage in physical activity in all aspects of their daily life, the more likely we are to achieve healthier, longer lives for everyone.”

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About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public’s health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a leading source of health information for nearly a century. Connect with us on [heart.org](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.

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