



Special Feature

Contact: Amy Blaser, Vice President

Phone: 402-562-3371

Email: aebblaser@columbushosp.org

Date: February 12, 2024

Strides to a healthier you: The surprising benefits of walking

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – In a world filled with fitness fads and high-energy workouts, reaching exercise goals may seem difficult and out of reach. But there's a simple exercise that requires nothing more than a pair of comfortable shoes and a desire for well-being — walking. This seemingly simple act holds the key to unlocking a treasure trove of health benefits that might surprise you. Imagine, with every step, you're not just covering ground but also embarking on a journey towards a healthier, happier you.

"Walking is a universal activity that suits people of all ages and fitness levels," said Dr. Luke Lemke, family practice physician at Columbus Medical Center. "It's a low-barrier entry to exercise that can have significant long-term health benefits."

Sometimes creating a good habit is easier said than done. Here are some tips on how to get started on the path to better health.

Unlocking health benefits

Walking isn't just about covering distances; it's a gateway to improved health. It's a simple yet powerful form of exercise that engages multiple muscle groups, enhances cardiovascular health and has both physical and mental health benefits.

One of the most significant advantages of walking is its impact on cardiovascular health — it's good for your heart! Regular walking has been linked to lower blood pressure and reduced cholesterol levels, contributing to a decreased risk of heart disease. It's a natural way to keep your heart healthy and strong.

Additionally, for individuals concerned about maintaining bone density and muscle mass, walking is a low-impact yet effective solution. It supports joint health without putting excessive strain on the body.

"Balance, which is often overlooked in fitness discussions, is another area where walking shines," said Lemke. Walking promotes balance and coordination, which are aspects of mobility that become more significant as we age. It's a simple way to reduce the risk of falls and enhance overall stability.

Mental health boost and beyond

Beyond the physical benefits, walking has a profound impact on mental health. The rhythmic motion and connection with the outdoors stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural mood enhancers. The release of endorphins during walking can alleviate stress, anxiety and depression. It's a simple yet effective strategy for maintaining good mental health.



Moreover, walking provides a unique opportunity for mindfulness and reflection. When you walk, you're not just moving your body, you're also giving your mind a break, which can lead to reduced stress and a boost in your overall mood.

"In our fast-paced lives, finding moments of quiet contemplation can be challenging," said Lemke. "Walking allows for a blend of physical activity and mental clarity, which is good for your mind, body and spirit."

Incorporating walking into your routine

To make the most of this straightforward exercise, consider these practical steps:

- **Fit walking into your day:** Aim for at least 150 minutes (about two and a half hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, like brisk walking, each week. Start with three 10-minute walks daily, gradually increasing duration and intensity.
- **Explore your local mall:** Indoor malls provide bright, weather-resistant environments for walking. Check if your local mall hosts organized walking programs, fostering a sense of community.
- **Prioritize safety:** Whenever you walk, keep your safety top of mind. Wear bright clothing in low-light conditions, use supportive footwear and be cautious at crosswalks. Don't assume drivers will see you or obey a sign or signal.

How to get started

Before embarking on a walking program, especially if you have pre-existing health conditions, consult with your healthcare provider. If you have any health concerns or conditions, it's wise to seek your doctor's approval before starting a walking regimen. They can offer personalized guidance based on your health profile.

"In the realm of exercise, walking is a timeless classic that never goes out of style," said Lemke.

The simplicity of walking should not be underestimated. It's a basic exercise that aligns with our natural movements, making it a sustainable and enjoyable way to enhance both physical and mental health. So, lace up your walking shoes, get moving and embark on a journey towards a healthier, happier you.

Explore the new walking track at the Columbus Fieldhouse!

Step into a world of wellness at the newly unveiled Columbus Fieldhouse, where a quarter-mile walking track awaits your every stride. Whether you're a fitness enthusiast or just starting your voyage towards a healthier lifestyle, our state-of-the-art walking track provides the perfect year-round solution. Nestled within the heart of the fieldhouse, this track offers a picturesque and climate-controlled environment, ensuring you can walk in comfort, no matter the weather outside. Membership fees open the door to a multitude of fitness opportunities, but if you prefer a taste of the experience, day passes are available. Join us on the track, where each step brings you closer to your health and fitness goals!

###