



Walking for Osteoarthritis

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Does Walking Help OA?

Studies have shown patients with osteoarthritis who walk every day have less risk of functional limitations. Walking at least 6,000 steps per day will help protect against this risk in people suffering from osteoarthritis of the knees.

Unfortunately, exercise isn't the easiest thing to get started with, especially when you have OA. However, the more you walk, the better the knees will feel. Walking is an easy, osteoarthritis-friendly activity and it also will help you lose weight, which means less weight putting stress on the knee joints. This can relieve the pain and restore function in those joints.

Getting Started

Try following the guidelines below to start and keep walking:

- **Talk with your doctor** – Talk with your doctor about any problems walking might pose. You will especially want to do this if you haven't exercised in a long time.
- **Make an appointment with a physical therapist** – It is a good idea to meet up with a physical therapist or certified exercise trainer before starting a walking program. They can design a program that will minimize the risk of injury. You can also get great information about correct posture when walking, how to target the correct muscles, and warm up and cool down techniques.
- **Take it easy at first** – Don't go gung ho the first time going out, or you may get worn out or risk injury. When setting goals, be realistic. A good goal is starting out walking 3 times a week for 10 minutes each time. After two weeks you can gradually add five minutes until you are up to 30 minutes a day for five to seven days a week. A journal is helpful to keep track of your progress.
- **Break up the walking if needed** – If you need to, you can do your daily walking in segments. Maybe five minutes in the morning, five minutes in the afternoon, and five minutes in the evening. You should do as much or little as you need to do to get a good workout in without overdoing it.
- **Minutes vs steps** – You can invest in a fitness tracker or pedometer to track your progress. It is said that 30 minutes is equal to 3,300 steps. If you want to reach the 6,000 steps per day, you will need to walk about 55 minutes to achieve that goal.
- **Get a friend to walk with you** – Time seems to go faster when you have someone to talk to while walking. It also makes you more accountable when you need to meet up with someone each day. Walking with a friend or with a walking group gives you the extra motivation you need to help you stick with it. You will want to wait until about week three to week six before getting into a walking group; you will need to be able to walk 30 minutes or more at this point.