

Step Into Fall



Fall is a great time to go for a walk. It's amazing to notice how the trees are changing colors around town. I especially love walking past the beautiful red and green colors on my neighbor's corner tree.

How many steps do you walk in a day? You might be surprised to find that it is probably more than you think. The average American walks about 5,000 steps per day in normal daily activity, which can vary widely from about 1,000 to 7,000 steps per day. Unfortunately, 5,000 steps a day is not enough to be considered healthy. Although 5,000 steps is equivalent

to approximately 2.5 miles of walking, this level of activity is actually considered to be sedentary! Between 5,000 and 7,499 steps could be classified as "low active," 7,500 to 9,999 steps are considered "somewhat active," and above 10,000 steps per day are considered "active." Taking more than 12,500 steps would be categorized "highly active." Therefore, the goal for a healthy, active lifestyle for adults is 10,000 steps per day.

Although 10,000 steps per day seems like a lot, a person can start by adding increments of 1,000 steps per week. One mile is approximately 2,000 – 2,500 steps, depending on the length of your stride. By merely walking around the block in most Utah towns, a person is walking approximately a half-mile or about 1,000 steps, which only takes about 10 minutes. Youth should be taking more than 12,000 steps a day. Older adults and persons with physical limitations can also benefit from increased physical activity, although they may modify the 10,000-step goal.

Walking is a low cost, fun and practical way to improve health and change a sedentary life style. Some things you can do to increase steps is take a walk with your spouse, child, friend or dog. Park farther from the store or office, or walk to the store or work. Take physical breaks during the day such as a walk during lunch or break time. If you have a meeting, make it a walking meeting or visit. Stand up and walk while talking on the phone. Do some exercises during commercial breaks, between programs or video games.

According to the Physical Guidelines for Americans, although a person may not lose a lot of weight by simply walking, there are a variety of health benefits including increasing cardiovascular health, strength, mobility, mood, sleep and decreasing risk of type 2 diabetes. A person will also tone up by increasing lean muscle and losing fat. If you are interested in weight loss, you can simply decrease your calories or portion size by 25 percent.

Intensity is also important. A leisurely stroll is not as beneficial as a brisk walk. To meet current guidelines, individuals are encouraged to walk a minimum of 3,000 steps in 30 minutes for five days per week. Three sessions of 1,000 steps in 10 minutes per day can also be used to meet the recommended goal.

A pedometer can measure your steps so you know how many steps you have taken. Pedometers are relatively inexpensive and can be purchased at a variety of stores. Be careful to do your homework before buying one, however, as there are some on the market that don't work properly.

Of course walking isn't the only exercise you can participate in, but it is a good foundation to which you can add or substitute other exercises. As with any exercise program, you should always check with your doctor before beginning or if you have any concerns.

If you're interested in increasing your physical activity or improving your health, check with your local county Extension office to see what programs are available.

Or, you can just take the Fall into Step Challenge, so you too can say, "No, my car isn't in the shop. I'm just taking advantage of walking more!"



SuzAnne Jorgensen works with adult and youth groups and individuals to educate them in the areas of canning, food safety, nutrition, finances, small business and

many other topics related to home, family and business in Garfield County.