



HEALTH CAPSULE | No.57 | 2018

Walking – Still Our Best Medicine

Walking is an accessible activity that can be easily incorporated into our daily routine. One cannot overrate the many benefits of walking: walking regularly improves general health and longevity. Here are other benefits from walking:

- Reduces the risk of coronary disease and stroke;
- Lowers blood pressure;
- Reduces cholesterol levels in blood;
- Increases bone density, hence prevents osteoporosis;
- Manages the negative effects of osteoarthritis;
- Eases back pain;
- Improves cardiorespiratory fitness and function;
- Reduces risks of bone fractures because the bones are stronger;
- Reduces risks injuries because the joints have better range of motion and the muscles are more flexible;
- Improves capability to control body weight;

Walking for 30 minutes covers a distance of 2.0 to 2.5 km and burns about 125 calories (520 kiloJoules). This amount may not seem like much, but if you walked five days a week within one year you would burn over 32,000 calories which would burn off more than 5 kg of fat.

- Improves mental health by reducing depression and anxiety;
- Improves quality of sleep;
- Improves recovery from illness.

Winter Walking Tips

With the right clothing, you can enjoy walking all year long, even in winter! Consider the following:



- Wear anything and everything that is loose, comfortable and sufficiently warm;
- Wear layers of clothing, preferably made of fabric that does not retain moisture*.
- Always wear a hat or some sort of headwear – one third of your body heat is lost through the head.
- Earmuffs and mittens or gloves also contribute to thermal comfort.
- Consider using walking or trekking poles when you expect slippery conditions, e.g., on ice, snow or rain-slicked streets.

*Cotton, silk, or wool is not a good choice for wearing next to the skin. These kinds of "wicking" fabrics tend to retain sweat smells despite "heavy duty" washing. Pre-soaking garments in a washing soda solution, followed by washing in warm or hot water using a good detergent is a proven remedy for smelly athletic clothing.

Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety



Ten ways to reduce your cancer risk

1. Be a non-smoker

Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health. Within 10 years of quitting, an ex-smoker's risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half. If you don't smoke, do your best to avoid smoke. No amount of second-hand smoke is safe.

2. Have a healthy body weight

Besides not smoking, having a healthy body weight is one of the best things you can do to prevent cancer. Check with your doctor about what a healthy body weight is for you and how you can work toward it.

3. Eat well

Enjoy a variety of vegetables and fruit every day. Limit red meat and avoid processed meat. Eat lots of fibre. Eating a healthy diet can help reduce your cancer risk.

4. Move more and sit less

Aim for 30 minutes of daily activity that gets your heart going each day to help protect against cancer. Too much sitting is different from not enough physical activity and can also increase your cancer risk. Try to take frequent, short breaks from sitting.

5. Limit alcohol

It's sobering news, but drinking any type or amount of alcohol increases your risk of developing cancer. The less alcohol you drink, the more you reduce your risk of cancer.

6. Practise sun safety

In Canada, sunlight is strong enough to cause skin cancer. Stay in the shade, wear protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses and apply sunscreen properly. Also, don't use tanning beds! Tanned skin is damaged skin.



7. Ask about vaccines

Hepatitis B infection increases your risk of liver cancer. HPV infection can lead to cervical, penile and other cancers. Check with your doctor about whether a hepatitis B or HPV vaccine is a good idea for you.

8. Test for radon

Radon is a colourless, odourless, tasteless radioactive gas found naturally in the environment. About 16% of lung cancer deaths in Canada are related to indoor radon. Test your home for radon by buying a test kit and take steps to lower radon levels if needed.

9. Be aware of hormones

Taking hormone replacement therapy for menopause or birth control pill increases the risk of some cancers and decreases the risk of others. If you are concerned, talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits.

10. Get screened

Screening tests help find cancer before you have any symptoms and even help prevent cancer by finding changes in your body that would become cancer if left untreated. Find out about organized screening programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers in your area.

Source: Canadian Cancer Society