



Mission Possible

Findlay City Schools **HEALTHWALK** Walking for a Healthier You!

Findlay City Schools wants to help you achieve a higher level of physical activity by bringing to you, HEALTHWALK. What is it?

HEALTHWALK is a self-directed walking club co-sponsored by Blanchard Valley Regional Health Center, Northwest Ohio Health Partnership, and Findlay City Schools through the grant received from the *Foundation for Healthy Communities of the Ohio Hospital Association*.

Exercise and Health

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart disease as those who are more active. This is true even if you have no other conditions or habits that increase your risk for heart disease. Lack of physical activity also leads to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations, and more use of medications for a variety of illnesses.

The good news is physical activity can protect your heart in a number of important ways. Moreover, to get benefits, you don't have to run a marathon. Regular activity, something as simple as a brisk 30 minute walk each day, can help you reduce your risk of heart disease.

The Surgeon General's recommendation for physical activity is to add about 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity each day ON TOP of your customary daily activities. This recommendation is a health recommendation – it is designed to improve your health and it is backed by solid evidence that you WILL improve your health if you follow this recommendation. But is it enough activity to prevent weight regain after a weight loss program? Is it enough activity to prevent overweight in the first place? No, the studies show it is not likely to be enough for either purpose.

Getting Started

There are now some studies suggesting that walking 10,000 steps a day is the right ball park to aim for in a walking program. This will equal approximately 5 miles, and is the model we will use for our walking program.

In order to keep track of your steps, we will also give you a pedometer. **500 pedometers** will be available on a first-come-first served basis beginning the week of October 23. These pedometers will be available in each building's main office. Firmly clip the pedometer around your waist in order for it to work properly. Wear it around for a couple of days to test it out, and see how many steps you take in the course of your daily life. You may be surprised! Then, get together with other staff members at your school, and make it a daily routine to walk together to reach the daily goal of 10,000 steps.

We recommend walking with a friend or group of friends to keep yourself motivated and to help develop the life-long habit of walking to maintain health.

Here are some tips for getting started:

1. As with any new exercise program, if you have health concerns of any kind, please check with your physician before beginning **HEALTHWALK**.
2. To avoid injury, you may need to work up slowly. Again, if you have any concerns about your joints, please discuss your exercise plans with your physician.
3. You will need a good pair of sneakers, with lots of cushion. If you are new to walking, you will find sneakers for walking, cross training and running. Any of these will work well for you.
4. Start out by wearing the pedometer around for a few days to see how many steps you take on a normal day. Once you have determined your baseline steps, set a reachable goal for the next week. Set a goal that is realistic and attainable for you. The ultimate goal is 10,000 steps. How you get there is decided by you on a timeline that suits your fitness level and general health. The important thing is to gradually get more active and stay more active.
5. For a weight loss program, emphasize longer walks, eventually building up to 45 – 60 minutes a day of walking. If you have trouble fitting 60 minutes of exercise into your schedule, think about splitting it up into two 30 minutes sessions a day.
6. Always start with a 5 minute, slower paced walk to warm up, and end with a 5 minute, slower paced walk to cool down.
7. Make sure to keep track of your steps on your daily log.
8. **IMPORTANT: We encourage you to set your own walking program goal, according to your fitness level.**

Safety Reminders

1. If you're new to exercise remember, start your activity program gradually, and work up slowly. Be sure to warm up, and cool down, and stretch afterwards each and every time.
2. A certain amount of stiffness is normal at first. If you do hurt a joint or pull a muscle, stop the activity for several days to avoid more injury.
3. Wear good shoes, with lots of cushioning.
4. If you walk on the street, watch for cars and wear light colored clothing, with reflective banding if doing so in the dark. Always face oncoming traffic.
5. On cool days outside, remember to layer your clothing. This way you can remove layers as you get warmer from exercising. Also remember in cooler/cold weather to protect your hands and head. 40 Percent of body heat is lost through your head.
6. Pair up with a buddy or a group after school.
7. Know the signs of a heart problem. Warning signs include sudden dizziness, cold sweat, paleness, fainting, extreme breathlessness, or pain/pressure in your upper body. These symptoms may occur during, or just after an activity. Ignoring these signals and continuing your activity may lead to serious heart problems. Instead, call your doctor right away.

**Rules and Incentives to HEALTHWALK are listed on the program log.
Good luck and happy walking!**