



Active Living Tips for Older Adults

What the researchers say – in plain language. Sponsored by Active Living Coalition for Older Adults (ALCOA)

Walk your way to health with a pedometer

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Everyone, including people with Type 2 diabetes and older adults, benefits from increasing their physical activity. However, many of us struggle to get started and then to stay with it. But the latest research brings some encouraging news. Walking is good for you and there is a tool that will help keep you moving. And, if you are an older adult with Type 2 diabetes, walking can help you manage your disease.

What is a pedometer?

A pedometer is a low-cost instrument that attaches at your waist and counts the number of steps you take. Research studies show that using a pedometer is a good way to motivate yourself. It can help you set goals and keep track of the number of steps you take in a day.

How many steps are enough?

The simple answer is that more is better. Health experts recommend that everyone should do 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, most if not all days of the week. If you are not used to exercising, start where you are and gradually build up. Once you are more active, you will gain extra benefits from walking faster and adding more steps to your day. (*See: What you need to know about pedometers and how to use one – page 2*)

What is Type 2 diabetes?

Over two million Canadians have diabetes. Ninety per cent affected by Type 2 diabetes which usually develops in adulthood and gets worse with age. It occurs when the body does not produce insulin, or does not effectively use the insulin that is produced. Insulin makes sure that the body's energy needs are met.



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Being active is safe for most people. Start slowly and build up. Not Sure? Consult with a health-care professional

Walking Tips

- ✓ Buy a good pair of comfortable walking shoes.
- ✓ Gradually increase the number of times you walk each week, and then the length of your walks, before you increase your pace.
- ✓ Work towards walking daily for at least 30 minutes as well as doing your daily activities.
- ✓ Minutes count – add it up 10 minutes at a time.

Keep track:

- Keep track of your daily step count on a calendar.
- Put the calendar where you can easily see it to remind you how you are doing.



Have fun!

- Vary where you walk to keep it interesting
- Walk with other people whenever you can – invite a friend along
- Find out if there is a walking program at your local mall (and if there isn't, see if you can start one!)

What you need to know about pedometers and how to use one

- ☞ Many sporting goods and department stores sell pedometers. If you have access to a computer, you can search for information on pedometers to buy one on the Internet.

- ☞ Pedometers are good for counting the number of steps you take.
- ☞ They do not accurately measure how far you travel or the calories you burn.
- ☞ Your pedometer should come with instructions on how to use it. So, you can just clip it on and start walking.
- ☞ Start by finding out how many steps you take in a day and then gradually increase your amount of walking.

Some precautions and tips for people with Type 2 diabetes:

- Ask your doctor to make sure you don't have a heart condition and that a walking program would be OK for you.
- If you have any problems with your feet, check with your doctor or foot specialist to make sure that with suitable shoes it is safe for you to walk. Otherwise, try cycling or swimming.
- When you start a new exercise program, make sure you monitor your blood sugar levels. If you have any questions, contact your doctor.
- Unless you are doing long and intense activities, you do not need to eat extra food before, during or after you exercise.

- ☞ Depending on the length of your step, 30 minutes of walking will be between 2,400 and 3,600 steps.
- ☞ The best tip: It only works if you use it!

Research references:

For a list of the studies and publications related to the articles in this newsletter, please contact the ALCOA office or visit our web site at www.ALCOA.ca (see page 1 for coordinates)

For more tips on physical activity check out Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults available free at 1-888-334-9769 or www.paguide.com.

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