GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY WALK

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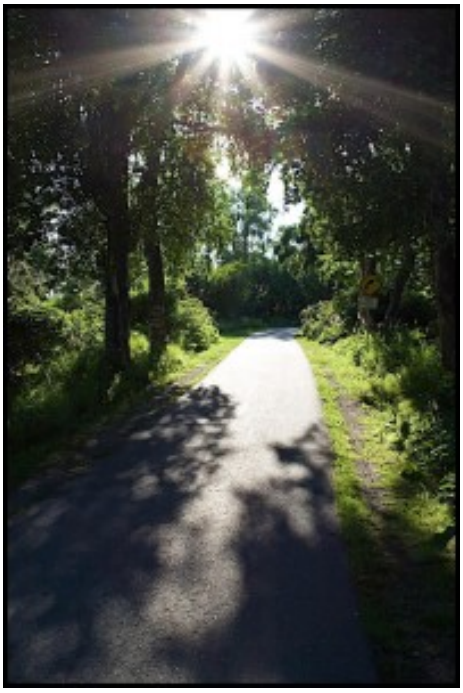

Walking is a really under-rated exercise.

For millennia walking has served us well. It got us where we needed to go and provided essential exercise for our bodies. I don't think the health benefits of walking are really taken seriously. Did you know walking consumes two-thirds the calories of jogging? Did you know it's possible to achieve improvements in your aerobic fitness through walking? Aerobic capacity is increased when you exercise at 55% to 75% of you maximum heart rate for 20 or more minutes.

How to pace your walk to achieve health benefits?

I decided to test this out with a heart monitor during a daily walk. Maximum heart rate is determined by subtracting your age from 220. For me that is 220 less 48 which is 172. This

puts my heart rate target for aerobic benefit between 95 and 130 beats per minute. I discovered I need a sustained brisk walk to achieve this heart rate. What exactly is a brisk walk? Someone who appears to be walking fast is about at the right pace. Another way this is often described is not walking so fast you couldn't carry on a conversation without being out of breath.

What heath benefits can you expect from a simple walk?

- \- Walking burns calories and lowers body fat
- \- Walking improves cardiovascular efficiency
- \- Walking lowers resting heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels
- \- Walking increases muscle tone and increases metabolism
- \- Walking improves immune function

The greatest benefit of walking is stress reduction.

In my opinion the greatest benefit of walking is stress reduction. I know not everyone has an hour for lunch, but if you work in an office the chances are very likely you could re-arrange your schedule so you do have an hour. If not, then there is before work and after work.

Whether we admit it or not, are jobs add stress to our life. The afternoon break of a walk provides an opportunity for you to step away from the stress. To step back, take a deep breath, relax, get some blood flowing, and change your immediate scenery. It can give you a whole new perspective on work issues and often you will find a solution pops into your head while you seem otherwise pre-occupied.

If you arrive at your walk particularly stressed you can add deep-breathing exercises to your walk. I personally prefer to walk wherever I have greater contact with nature. It can be a great mindfulness exercise to focus your attention on nature instead of the endless rollercoaster of thoughts racing through your mind. You will literally feel yourself relaxing.

Why walking is the right exercise option for just about everyone.

I think walking is an exercise everyone can participate in. You don't need to buy anything to do it and you can do it anywhere you are. No special clothes or shoes are required. If you have a walking trail that's great. If not, use a sidewalk. I think it's always best to get outside if you can, but if you can't, then walk inside. Walk in place if you have to. As crazy as it may seem,

you can get a great workout with just a single step that you can step up onto and then back down off of.

Don’t let winter stop you.

Don’t let winter stop you, just dress warm. Appropriate footwear and a scarf or facemask are essential for comfort. I also like to keep a pair of windbreaker pants for really cold days. Those concerned about messing up their hair will have to put some extra effort into headwear. Ear muffs can be a good option and sometimes a bandana under a hat can prevent the messed hair. Winter walks can be both exhilarating and beautiful.

Final thoughts.

Consult your Doctor before starting any exercise program. I have been a life-long proponent of the daily walk. It’s something I look forward to and always enjoy. I don’t always get a walk every day, but when I miss a day it just makes the next walk all the better. My advice will always be, take a walk! You’ll be glad you did.

Photo 1 - Laubenstein, K. (Photographer). (2008).Walking Path. [Web Photo]. Retrieved from https://picasaweb.google.com

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