

Getting Healthy – Eating, Walking, or Just What?

You will have heard lots about the need to get healthy. You just need to eat right and exercise and you will be healthy or at least healthier. Exercise, though, what type is right – how much and will it suit you?

Well. There is good news. One of the oldest forms of locomotion has now become an even bigger means of getting healthy. It is walking.



The traditional method was hiking but that has now had a new twist on it for the last couple of years and getting bigger and better is using walking that is measured – the pedometer.

What do you need to do? Purchase a pedometer, read the instructions to set the pedometer to either your steps or your stride. Then clip it on your waist band and start walking.

How many steps? The latest information is that 10,000 per day will keep you healthy. That amount of steps equals between 4-5 miles. When you do 30 minutes of moderate intensive cardiovascular exercise that is approximately 10,000 steps.

You can gradually build up the distance and you might be pleasantly surprised at how much walking you actually do at work. You accumulate the 10,000 steps over the day which means you have not been sedentary. When I was working in the hospital, I was very surprised to see that I walked 3 miles per day just on the job. I had calculated that I needed to do 4.2 miles per day for the 10,000 steps so I just needed to do 1.2 miles in the evenings. This just meant a 20 minute walk at a moderate intensity then I just had to do my stretches as I cooled down. It also meant a loss of 10 pounds over 10 months with no change in what I was eating.



There are many different brands of pedometers and they range from very inexpensive ones to more expensive ones that are a bit more reliable and used for research purposes. This is just one example of a pedometer. They come in a wide range of styles and different prices depending on how fancy you would like yours. Like any measuring tool there is a bit of potential error. These can be just due to having loose clothing, having the pedometer on an angle, and inaccurate measures due to hip movement like driving the car. It is best to count about 3% error in your daily total due to the potential error.

Should you wish to investigate how to get started in a walking program and also want to make sure your knees, back, and hips are up to the challenge, you might want to have a fitness and range of motion assessment done by your local physiotherapist. You will also be taught the best stretches to do before and after your walk and get advice on determining what the best footwear for your walking program is.

The next step is up to you. The best thing about a walking program is that it can be done year round.

Janice Webber of Janice Webber Physiotherapy Services has offices in Dartmouth and Halifax to assist you in getting a walking program set up for you or your family. You can reach her at (902)469-3214 or www.physiotherapyworks.ca