



Take  
steps  
to be  
active

Walk  
yourself  
Happy

JUST 30 MINS A DAY



Government  
of South Australia

SA Health

be active.

# Welcome to your first steps towards better health

Did you know that more than half of all adults don't include enough physical activity in their day? In fact, almost one in five adults aren't active at all. This is one of the contributing factors to chronic disease and ill health. But we can help change this, simply by doing more regular, moderate physical activity – and it's easier than you think.

By reading this brochure, you're actually taking the first step to adding walking and other physical activities to your lifestyle.

Regular physical activity is important for everyone. Some of the benefits include:

- **Feeling better...**

... with more energy, improved sleep and added fun in your day. It also enhances self esteem and confidence.

- **Enjoying better health...**

... physical activity reduces your risk of chronic disease by controlling weight, blood pressure and cholesterol and by lowering the risk of heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis (bone decay).

- **Having a healthier state of mind...**

... which means less stress, better concentration and enhanced memory and learning ability.

Add healthy eating to the equation and you'll feel even better. See page 17 about the importance of good nutritional habits.

Walking is one of the best things you can do to live a longer, healthier life. You only need 30 minutes a day, and it can be one long walk or three short ones. And it's not just your body that benefits. The way you think and feel changes too. The world looks better and brighter!

Welcome!

# How much physical activity is enough?

For good health, the National Physical Activity Guidelines for Australians recommend that adults:

1. Think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience. Any form of body movement is an opportunity for improving health, not a time-wasting inconvenience.
2. **Be active** every day in as many ways as you can. Make a habit of walking or cycling instead of using the car, or do things yourself instead of using labour-saving machines.
3. Put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most (preferably all) days. You can accumulate your 30 minutes (or more) throughout the day by combining a few shorter sessions of activity of around 10 to 15 minutes each.
4. Also enjoy some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness if you can. This guideline does not replace guidelines 1 to 3. Rather, it adds an extra level for those who are able, and wish, to achieve greater health and fitness benefits.

'Moderate activities' include things like walking, swimming, gardening and playing golf. These activities increase your heart rate, without necessarily getting you puffed out.

## How much physical activity do children need?

Kids need at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of physical activity every day. Like adults, this is best accumulated throughout the day as part of active play, recreation, sport and even travel and transport.

Ideally, children should spend no more than two hours a day in front of a screen. This includes TV, video games, movies and computers.

The National Physical Activities Guidelines for Australians can be found at [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/beactive](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/beactive)

# How to be active regularly

The easiest way to increase your physical activity is to make it a regular part of your lifestyle. Here are some simple ideas to get you started:

## At home:

- Walk your dog each morning or evening.
- Go for a walk after dinner.
- Limit the amount of TV you watch and try having a TV-free day once a week with your family.
- Housework and gardening count – vacuuming, weeding and mowing the lawn are all good.



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Remember, find an activity you enjoy – that way you're more likely to keep at it.

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## At work:

- Walk to see a workmate instead of emailing.
- Use your lunch break to go for a 10 to 15 minute walk, it's a great way to clear the mind.
- Try to get away from your desk during the day, even if it's just to stretch your legs.
- Use the stairs whenever you can.

## Travelling:

- Walk to your local shops instead of taking the car.
- Ask yourself if you really have to drive. Can you walk or ride instead?
- If you must drive, park a little further away and walk the rest of the way.
- If you catch public transport, get off one stop earlier.
- Walk your children to school once a week.

## Out and about:

- Instead of catching up for coffee and cake, go for a walk or a bike ride.
- Go for a stroll along the beach, around a park or even explore your own neighbourhood on foot.
- Have a picnic in your local park and bring a footy, soccer ball or frisbee.
- Ask your local council about walking trails.
- Join a walking group in your area for extra support and motivation.



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# be active safely

If you haven't been physically active for a while, it's important to build up your activity gradually over weeks, not days. Start out by walking 10 to 15 minutes, every couple of days. After a few weeks, you'll find yourself walking faster, further and for longer! The next step is to slowly increase your activity to five or more times per week.

Each time you set off, start gently and allow your body to warm up. Do some basic stretches, holding them for 10 to 20 seconds and repeat each stretch two to three times.

Take some time to stretch those muscles after your activity as well. This will help to avoid or reduce any muscle soreness you might feel later – especially when you're just starting out. Don't be too worried about this soreness, it's simply your muscles increasing their strength!

## Be comfortable

The best thing about walking is that you don't need fancy gym gear or equipment. All you need are comfy clothes and supportive shoes. They'll help make your walking safer and more enjoyable. For specific foot problems or advice on footwear, have a chat to your local podiatrist.



*And don't forget... wear a hat and sunscreen when outdoors.*

## Drink enough water

Remember to drink lots of water before, during and after your activity, don't wait until you feel thirsty or start sweating. Here are some guidelines:

- Drink 2 to 3 glasses (at least 500ml) 30 to 60 minutes before activity.
- Drink 1 to 2 glasses (at least 200ml) every 15 minutes during activity.
- Slowly drink 5 to 6 glasses (about 1 litre) after activity.



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# Aim for moderate intensity

Only you can really know how you're feeling and how hard you're working. A good way to estimate that is to use the 'Talk Test'.

## The Talk Test Scale:

- 0 - At rest: breathing easily, with no problems talking (resting heartbeat).
- 1 - Light: still breathing easily but you notice an increase in heartbeat.
- 2 - Moderate: talking comfortably, breathing becomes more rapid and you begin to warm up.
- 3 - Hard: breathing more deeply and harder.
- 4 - Very hard: you find it difficult to have a conversation because you are breathing too hard or are short of breath.

Aim to work at a moderate intensity that lets you breathe comfortably throughout your workout. This will ensure a safe level of physical activity and give you some great benefits.

*If you have a chronic illness or are worried about the risks of physical activity, talk to your doctor before you start.*



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# Set a goal and work towards it

It's always best to start with short-term goals that are realistic and achievable, and then build on them later. For instance, set a goal of going for a walk three times a week. Even if you only walk for 10 minutes each time, you have met your goal. Next week, you might aim to walk for 15 minutes each time. See how easy it is to build up.

Then, when you've achieved a goal, you might like to treat yourself to something you enjoy, for example:

- Going to a movie or sporting event.
- Sleeping-in on the weekend.
- Buying something new to wear or a backpack for walking.
- Taking a long, hot bath.
- Getting a massage.

## Walk yourself happy!

An activity as cheap and simple as walking, for a total of 30 minutes each day, is enough to help you live a longer, happier and healthier life. And remember, not only is it good for your body – it's great for your mind as well. Even just 10 minutes of brisk walking three times a day can help reduce the risk of chronic disease and improve your overall wellbeing.

# Why walk?

Well, for starters, it's free! And since it's South Australia's most popular form of physical activity, chances are, you won't be doing it alone.

Walking helps us maintain a healthy heart, keeps our bones and muscles in good condition and reduces our risk of disease. It can also help us to:

- Relax.
- Relieve stress.
- Improve our mood.

## Let's walk together

Walking groups are a great way to get started, keep going and enjoy being active. You can meet new people, and also support and motivate each other to achieve your individual goals.

To find a walking group near you, chat to your local council or visit the websites on page 19 of this booklet.

## How walking-friendly is your community?

Visit the Heart Foundation's website to check your neighbourhood's 'walkability', by conducting a walking audit using the Walkability Checklist.



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# Counting up to better health

moving from 30 minutes to 10,000 steps

It is estimated that 10,000 steps per day is a good target to aim for to improve overall health. The average person walks between 3,000 and 4,000 steps per day. Ever thought about how many steps you walk in a day? Using a pedometer is a great way to find out. You might find you walk 10,000 steps per day, or that you walk less than you think! Whatever your results, knowing how far you walk in a day will help to motivate you.

But remember, if you haven't been physically active for a while, you should build up to your target gradually.

## What are the benefits of counting steps?

By keeping a record of the number of steps you take, you can:

1. Get immediate feedback of how much you walk during the day.
2. Enjoy greater confidence and motivation to maintain and increase your physical activity.
3. Use it as an accurate guide to help your goal-setting, and keep track of your progress.

## Make walking part of your day – every day

Plan your walk: keep track of your progress by using a planner to schedule your walking activities. This is a good idea if you want to set yourself a goal and work towards it.

Track your walk: there are lots of apps for smart phones that can record your walks, including the route, time, distance and speed. Some even connect to a special pedometer or microchip that you can put in your shoes, or you could use the log book on page 13 to get started now.

Walk yourself happy

# What is a Pedometer?

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A pedometer is a motion sensor that detects up and down movement when you're walking or running. Every time your foot touches the ground, it registers one step.

All you do is attach the pedometer to your belt or waistband, above your dominant leg, and then it records the total number of steps taken throughout the day.

Once you have started walking with a pedometer, you'll begin to notice all the different ways to increase your daily physical activity.

## Using the pedometer: getting started

Positioning your pedometer correctly is really important. It will only work properly if it's both horizontal to the ground and positioned the right way up. Most simple pedometers follow the same set-up procedures, but read your unit's instructions to find out exactly how to set and re-set it.

Start by checking its accuracy:

1. Attach your pedometer, then set it to zero.
2. Walk 50 steps.
3. While the pedometer is still attached, check the reading.
4. If your step count is more than one or two steps out, move it slightly outwards on your belt or waistband and repeat this process.

If you still can't get an accurate reading, try positioning the pedometer on your waistband or belt, above your buttock, directly in line with your hipbone.



Take steps to be active



Setting goals for physical activity can motivate you to make healthy changes to your lifestyle.



### Sample Logbook

Date / / Week 1			
Day	Total step count	Total minutes	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Highest step count			
Total for week			

#### Using the pedometer to help achieve your targets

Pedometers can be really useful in planning and achieving your physical activity targets. The following program is designed to help set and increase your target step count across several weeks:

1. Wear the pedometer for one week without adjusting your daily routine. Make sure you record your steps in the logbook before going to bed.
2. After the first week, check to see what your highest and lowest step count was for the week (e.g. the range might be from 1,500 up to 3,000 steps).
3. If you feel comfortable, on each day of the second week, try to match the highest daily step count from week one (e.g. 3,000).
4. In the third and fourth weeks, if you're feeling positive and able, try to add a further 500 steps per day to the highest daily total from the week before.
5. Continue adding an appropriate number of steps to your daily total at the beginning of each week, until you reach the 10,000 steps goal.

Date / / Week 2			
<b>GOAL: Highest step count from Week 1 =</b>			
Day	Total step count	Total minutes	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Highest step count			
Total for week			

## Sample Logbook

Date / / Week 3			
GOAL: Highest step count from Week 2 =			
Day	Total step count	Total minutes	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Highest step count			
Total for week			

Date / / Week 4			
GOAL: Highest step count from Week 3 =			
Day	Total step count	Total minutes	Notes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Highest step count			
Total for week			

# Dealing with setbacks and hurdles

Once you start to **be active** regularly, you might find that something comes up to interrupt your routine. That's OK. The key is to treat these setbacks as temporary and to get going again as soon as you can.

However, you should also watch out for excuses. Do any of these sound familiar?

### "I'm too tired today."

This is exactly why you should be active! Remember, by getting your blood pumping for 30 minutes each day, you can reduce stress and tiredness and improve your quality of sleep.

### "It's boring!"

Try a new activity, or find a friend with similar interests. Aim to set yourself some new goals.

### "I don't have time."

Review the times you are being active – are they practical? Try to make being active a regular part of your day. Go for a walk at lunchtime or stroll to the shops.

### "It's expensive."

You don't need a gym membership to get your 30 minutes every day. Walking is free! So grab your sneakers and hit the pavement.

### "I do enough already."

Most South Australians actually don't do enough physical activity. Casual walking, like grocery shopping, is not enough. You need to keep up a moderate intensity for at least 10 minutes.



## Plan your activity today

### Step 1: Choose the right time for you

- Pick the most suitable time of day for you to **be active** and stick with it.
- Remember, small changes to your daily habits can lead to big changes to your physical activity... and your health!
- If you're too tired when you get home at night, perhaps some activity at lunchtime is better for you, or before work for a fresh start to the day.
- The best times for me to **be active** are: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: Find an activity that you like

- Build upon activities you already enjoy doing.
- Or, try a new activity – think of one and go for it!
- An activity I would like to try is: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3: Set yourself a goal and work towards it

- Set yourself a realistic, short-term goal.
- Plan to reward yourself.
- My goal is: \_\_\_\_\_
- My reward will be: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 4: **be active** safely

- Start out slowly and stretch before and after.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Wear sun protection.

### Step 5: Record your activities

- Keep a record of your daily or weekly activities. It's a great way to see your progress. Something like the log book on page 13 is a great way to start.
- Review your diary each month. If you didn't achieve your goal the first time around, don't worry. It often takes several attempts to become regularly active. Just keep trying!

*Walk yourself happy*

# Eat well and be active

An active lifestyle and nutritious foods will help reduce your risk of gaining weight and developing problems such as type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and some cancers.

We each need different amounts of food for good health, depending on our age, sex, body size and activity level (and for women, whether you are pregnant or breastfeeding). For more information visit [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyliving](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyliving)

**The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommends eating a variety of foods every day from each of the following food groups:**

- Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles (preferably wholegrain).
- Vegetables, legumes (e.g. beans, chickpeas).
- Fruit.
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese.
- Lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, legumes.

Also drink plenty of water and avoid juice, soft drinks and sports drinks.

### Balancing food and physical activity

To maintain a healthy body weight we need to balance the energy going into our body (through what we eat and drink) with the energy our body uses (for body functions, growth, repair and physical activity). Although the body burns extra energy during activity, being active is not an automatic licence to eat unhealthy food. For example, you need to walk for about 115 minutes, or run fast for 45 minutes, to use up the energy in a meat pie!

So even when you're being active, it's important to eat according to The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating  
Discretionary foods such as sweets, cakes, chips, chocolates, pastries, takeaway foods, and soft drinks should only be consumed sometimes and in small amounts.

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### Healthy eating tips

Consider these small swaps you can make every day to eat well and **be active** on your way to a healthier life:

#### Swap big for small:

- Don't overcrowd your plate.
- Think twice before going back for seconds.
- Eat slowly to give your stomach time to signal it's full.

#### Swap unhealthy for healthy:

- Replace fried food with fresh food.
- Choose water over soft drinks.
- Switch from takeaway to home made meals.

#### Swap often for sometimes:

- Eat less "sometimes" food.
- Eat more low-fat, low-sugar, high-fibre foods.

For more information on healthy eating visit [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyliving](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyliving)

#### Websites:

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/beactive](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/beactive)

[www.swapit.gov.au](http://www.swapit.gov.au)

[www.sportsa.org.au](http://www.sportsa.org.au)

[www.bikesa.asn.au](http://www.bikesa.asn.au)

[www.walkingsa.org.au](http://www.walkingsa.org.au)

[www.southaustraliantrails.com](http://www.southaustraliantrails.com)

[www.recreationsa.org](http://www.recreationsa.org)

[www.heartfoundation.org.au/walking](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/walking)



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