

## **Start Walking – there is no better time than right now**

Source: National Resource Center on Native American Aging  
“Walk your way to Fitness” Guide and Daily Log  
<http://medicine.nodak.edu/crh/nrcnaa>

More than 50% of all Americans are overweight or obese which is a risk factor for developing chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. Another risk factor is the reduction of physical activity in our daily lives that make this a heavy problem.

The good news is that we can lift off that heavy problem by increasing our daily physical activity by walking. Walking saves gas for your vehicle, walking also helps you feel good by:

- Increases your heart fitness
- Reduces your stress
- Gives you more energy
- Tones your muscle
- Get more restful sleep
- Reduces your risk of getting many serious health problems
- Helps you lose weight and keep it off
- Provides time to enjoy companions or to be alone
- Makes you feel good

It is recommended that you check with your doctor before starting to walk to get fit.

For each walk:

1. Walk slowly for 3-5 minutes to warm up to help your muscles adjust to the increase demands to exercise and be able to exercise longer more easily.
2. Increase your speed for 10-15 minutes of brisk walking and add 2-5 minutes per week. The key is to increase your activity slowly to stay healthy.

3. End each walk with a 3-5 minute cool down of slow walking to allow your heart rate and blood pressure to gradually return to normal.

After your walk do gentle stretching to prevent muscle cramps. Your muscles have warmed up and it will be more flexible for stretching. When stretching be gentle, relax and never force a stretch.

The Right way to stretch:

- Relax into the stretch.
- Never force the stretch and never bounce.
- Hold the stretch 5-10 seconds, ease out of the stretch, then relax into the stretch again for another 5-10 seconds.
- Take a relaxing breath as you start each stretch. Inhale through the nose and exhale slowly the mouth.
- Keep your shoulder relaxed at all times.