

Fit for Life

Learning to Walk...

The right way!

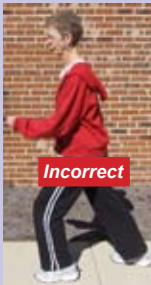
By Dawn Davis, "The Fitness Diva"

Of course, we know HOW to walk... our parents taught us at a very early age and they were so excited when we took that first step! But, after that we were on our own and most of us never really learn how to walk properly to get the most health benefit. We go through our lives strolling, strutting, waddling, sliding or shuffling.

Done properly, walking is one of the best exercises you can do for good health. It can strengthen your heart, decrease your blood pressure and help with weight management. When you're walking to get or stay fit, your form, pace, and breathing is important.

Learning the proper walking technique is easy. Mastering it and making it second nature takes time and practice as you work to increase and maintain a comfortable pace.

1. Heel first. When walking, always strike the ground with your heel first. Roll your foot through to the toe, with no unnatural pushing from one foot to the other.



2. Shorter Steps. If you usually walk with a long stride, switch to more frequent, short steps which will give you a better workout and be easier on your joints.



3. Swing your arms. Swinging your arms properly will give you a better aerobic workout, burn more calories, and engage more muscles throughout your torso. The

proper swing is to bend your arms at the elbow at a 90-degree angle and swing them toward the center of your body. Be careful not to cross the center line of your body or bend your arms at more than 90 degrees. Using this technique you will be able to move faster than if your arms are dangling at your sides. Keep your hands in a lightly curled fist (avoid clenching).

4. Heads Up. A protruding chin or tilting the head down to look at the ground is a common mistake. If the head is allowed to tilt forward, excess strain is put on the neck and shoulders and will lead to undue fatigue. The head should be level, eyes looking forward, and the chin parallel to the ground. Focus on looking forward to about 12-20 feet in front of you. If you need to look closer to where you are stepping, lower your eyes, not your whole head.



5. Posture. The foundation of a good basic stride is posture. The spine should be elongated by standing straight...not in a rigid military position...merely straight, tall, and relaxed. You should be able to draw a straight line from your ear down to your shoulder, to your hip, knee and ankle. A common problem to look for is an unnatural arch in the lower back. Commonly known as a "sway back", this incorrect posture can create great discomfort, especially when walking long distances. To eliminate this problem, practice tucking your buttocks under your body, putting the pelvis area

in a more neutral position. To accomplish this, pull in your abdominal muscles, and at the same time squeeze your buns.

THAT'S IT! At first, this technique may seem complicated; but actually it is a natural motion where the whole body works in unison. Because of its low impact nature, the head does not bob up and down. When done correctly, it is a very fluid movement that is easier on the body.

Start using this technique now and join me at the March for Meals run/walk on March 21st. All proceeds go to the Meals on Wheels program. Even if you can't walk that day you can register and support the program.

Note: We are grateful for any financial donations to our fitness center to keep water and sanitizing wipes supplied for our members. There is a donation container in the fitness center for your contributions.

Reminder: The Walk Georgia registration begins February 15 and ends March 9. The program starts March 1 and continues through April 25. For more info: ddavis@fayss.org or 770-719-0813, ext. 124.



Dawn Davis is a Certified Personal Trainer and Senior Fitness Instructor with special certifications in a variety of special programs including yoga, tai chi, pilates and Zumba Gold.

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