



# Ramping Up Your Spring/Summer Walking

Booklet by *Lorrie Mickelson*

First of all, **congratulations** on adding walking to your wellness routine!

Whether you're a seasoned walker looking to spice things up, or you walk occasionally and are looking for some motivation to make walking part of your daily routine, you will find some helpful tidbits in this booklet.

Before we get started, I have a video that accompanies this booklet, and it can be found by clicking this [direct link](#). The video brings this booklet to life!

*So, let's get started!*

## *Warm Up (Yup, it helps!)*

Here's the thing...if deciding on how to warm up stops you from getting out the door, just get your body moving! Start slowly so that your body has an easier adjustment to walking (especially if you have been sitting all day).

However, I will challenge you to try these easy warm-up exercises and notice whether you are able to walk a little faster or longer and if your walk feels easier. If it does, then warming up is time well spent.

Full disclosure here: Sometimes I just head out the door because I'm in a hurry and just want to get my walk in. But I can honestly tell you that I notice the difference when I don't warm up. For example, I don't feel the ease in my walk that I do after I've warmed up. This is especially true if you have existing tightness or pain in any of your joints.

Have a peek at the video right here for my 3 favorite warm-up exercises.

## *Ideas for Ramping Things Up...*

Try these techniques if you already have an established walk of at least 30 minutes at a comfortable pace. If you're not there yet, set this as a goal, incorporating the warm-up and cool-down stretches. Don't forget to congratulate yourself along the way!

### *Interval Walking*

1 After you have been walking for 5-10 minutes, start to pick up your pace for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then slow back down to your regular pace. You can time this on your watch (alternating 2 minutes at moderate pace and 1 minute at faster pace) for the duration of your walk. You can also walk faster between light stands or hydro poles, counting out every few poles. This not only has the effect of increasing the cardiovascular benefits of the walk but also making the walk go a heck of a lot faster! For those of you who want to add a light jog in here as well, it's a wonderful way to ramp things up and work towards running consistently for 30 minutes (if this is one of your goals).

## 2 *Walking with Poles (Nordic Pole Walking)*

All in all, pole walking gets a bad rap. Many people think the Nordic Walking Poles are for “older” people and/or people who need the support. Although the poles are wonderful if you have hip, back or knee issues, they add a strength component to your walking. With the support of the poles, you can walk faster and with better posture, utilizing your core and arm muscles. You can also burn up to 20% more calories than walking without the poles.

Check out my video for more on this, but I suggest you contact your local recreation department, YWCA or library. Some of these places “lend” poles and have Nordic Walking Clinics.

I have been experimenting with the poles over the last year and quite like them. One caveat: It's sometimes harder to walk with another person when using the poles, as your pace will be quite steady and it's hard to start and stop. There is also sometimes extraneous pole movement (I have hit my husband with a pole). Walking with your dog is also challenging or impossible, but there are certain situations where it might work (depending on location, temperament of your dog, etc).

## 3

*Adding a Hill Challenge*

After you have eased into your walk (5-10 minutes), it may be time to add a hill.

I recommend you don't start with a very steep hill, just a grade that allows you to feel your leg muscles working and gets you breathing a little harder. Within a 30-40 minute walk, I suggest 1-3 little hills that challenge you for a few minutes, adding them in once or twice a week to start.

Sometimes, it's difficult to find the "perfect" hill and have it fit into your walking route. You can explore different options and see what works best for you. I have even just had one hill in my walk and walked up and down it 3 times and then continued on my walk. You can get quite creative with this. Just be careful with sensitive knees, especially going downhill!



*Putting it all Together:  
A Suggested Weekly Schedule!*

*Monday: Longer Walk*

45-60 minutes at a moderate pace

*Tuesday: Shorter Walk*

30-40 minutes but with higher intensity using intervals

*Wednesday: Moderate Walk*

30-45 minutes

*Thursday: Hill Walk*

30-40 minutes

*Friday: Nordic Pole Walking*

10-15 minutes using the poles the first time

*Saturday: Longer Hike*

1-2 hours at slower pace

*Sunday: Rest Day*

Or swim, bike, kayak... just do something different!

## *Frequently Asked Questions (And Other Stuff)*

### *Can I walk with weights?*

I get this question often. I am not a big fan of walking with weights, as they can cause tension in the neck and shoulders and sometimes throw your gait off. Just add some extra arm pumping, keeping your arms and shoulders relaxed.

You can do your regular strength-training routine after your walk (depending on length and intensity of both). But if that feels like too much, then add in a plank or two after your walk. I prefer to do this and keep my strength training on separate days, two days a week. It feels very efficient and rewarding (seriously!) topping off my walk with a little more strength. Try 1 or 2 planks, working up to 1 minute each. Then finish with your regular stretches. You will love it!










## *What should I wear?*

It doesn't take much to de-rail our good intentions. Keep it simple and non-fussy. If you are going for a noon-time walk break from work, just throw on a pair of sneakers, and you are good to go. Better yet, if you have comfortable work shoes then just head out the door; easy peasy! However, this can depend on the weather. If it's hot, and you don't want to be hot and sweaty when you get back to work, then have a walking t-shirt that you can throw on.

As you walk more in various weather conditions, you will start to find the clothes that work best for windy, hot, sunny, cool, etc. Don't be shy to have just a few combinations and just wash more often! Less decision making around this gets us out the door faster.

My own personal mantra around walking and clothing is "comfort over fashion". You don't want anything riding up or sliding down any part of your body. And nothing that is going to trip you up (fancy yoga walking wear, for example). You want to feel "good" in your skin when you are out and around, so I will leave it to you to find that balance that works for you.

## So... Some must-haves I recommend:

-  Hat and sunglasses
-  Light jacket that you can tie around your waist that does double duty if you want to cover your bum
-  Comfortable clothing that breathes
-  Comfortable walking shoes (purchasing new ones at least once a year if you are walking every day)
-  Water bottle or know your water stops - it's handy to have a water strap that wraps around your waist to hold a bottle
-  Pedometer/Fitbit for you tracker types - it is a great motivator
-  If walking with your dog ... don't forget their water (mine drinks the lake water, but not always, and those doggy bags of course)

It seems all common sense, but our minds are busy, AND it's not just about knowing but having the stuff handy. It doesn't take much to thwart our walks (left my shoes at the office, can't find the dog bags, where's my water bottle? ... etc. etc.) All I can say is, "been there, done that"!

## *Does it matter where I walk?*

I get this question quite often as well, and it is a good one. Scenery, traffic, safety, surface, etc. all come into play and can make or break our walks. Convenience is important, but if you live in the country and don't want to walk on the dirt road or with the bears, then choose somewhere that is convenient to drive to. As much as you can, try to find a place that you look forward to driving to.



My husband and I switch from our neighbourhood and downtown in the winter to the boardwalk by the lake in the spring/summer, and it is a glorious walk that we look forward to each night. I recommend you change up surfaces, especially if you are walking on asphalt in the same direction and on the same side of the road. Do your route backwards and add in some grass, gravel or a boardwalk now and again. Your joints will love you for it.

*How long, fast or hard should I walk to experience the benefits?*

This depends entirely on your goals. If weight loss is a goal, then it's helpful to set your weight loss target and track your walking (distance, steps and time) in terms of how it's helping you achieve weight loss. The recommended number of steps for health and fitness is 10,000, but you may need to do more based on your goals. Of course, weight loss is not just about walking but also incorporating strength training and nutrition.

You could be walking to de-stress at the end of the day, to energize yourself at the beginning of the day, to manage various health issues or to get or remain healthy and strong.

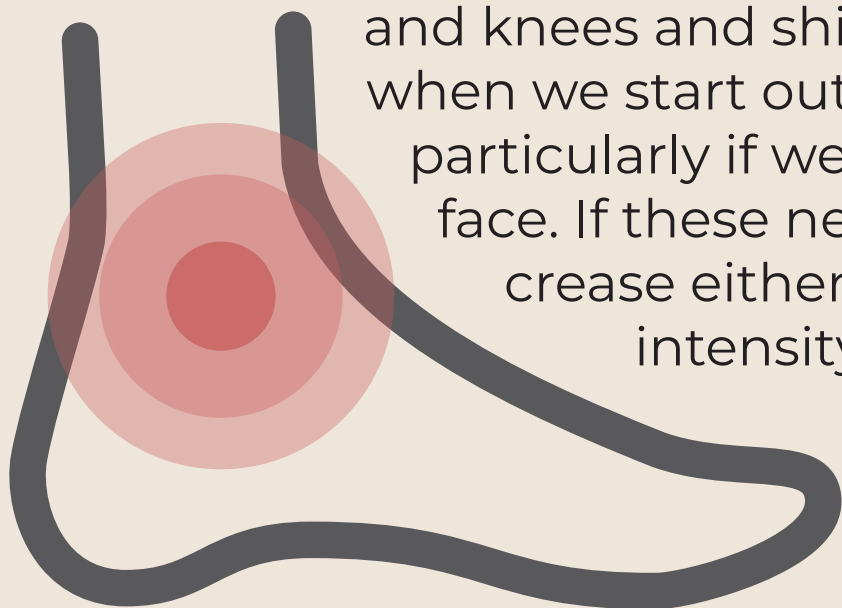
In general, walk as long as you feel is necessary to enjoy the benefits and/or reach the goals that you have set for yourself.

## *What if I am in pain?*

First and foremost, you want to discuss this with your health practitioner. Together, you can come up with a starting point and discuss your goals around your pain and your health. In general, you do not want to increase your pain during the walk or feel an increase in pain after the walk.

Warming up and starting slowly is helpful. You can also try using poles and noticing the surfaces that feel the best for you. Patience will be your best walking partner!

If you experience "new" pain or discomfort when you start out in the spring, check that your shoes are still supportive and that you're not doing too much too soon. Sore hips and knees and shin splints can arise when we start out doing a bit too much, particularly if we are on a harder surface. If these new pains arise, decrease either your time, distance or intensity and/or take a break for a couple of days, and then start back slowly.



## *What type of shoes are best for walking?*

Clients ask me whether they should be using walking shoes, running shoes, hiking shoes or just comfortable shoes. I hate to sound like a broken record, but it depends on you. If you are going to change your interval sprints into more of a run, then running shoes could do double duty. If you are hiking through the bush, uphill, across rocks and tree stumps then hiking shoes are appropriate but are too supportive and inflexible for the road or boardwalk, not allowing your feet to go through the heel/toe process. I highly recommend having your walking gait assessed by a therapist or a professional at a sports store. They can speak to you about your walking goals and direct you toward the best choices. They will also tell you what type of a walker you are (ie: where you put your weight when you walk) so that they can suggest the best shoe for you. If the store does not have a person that can do this for you, move to the next store.

## *Are there any helpful apps?*

You actually don't need any special watches or apps to receive all the benefits of your walking. However, if you find they help with either your motivation, celebration or both, then go for it!

### Here are some options:



#### Watches/Pedometers:

Fitbit, Polar, Garmin or other step tracking/-goal setting watches. Speak with a salesperson or do your research online to find the best fit for your goals (price, ease of use etc.). We use Garmin, and it works quite well.



#### Apps:

Runtastic and Map your Walk are two good choices, but there are many others!

Do a little research and chat with your friends to find out what they like. The reviews are also a great place to gather more information to determine which option is best for you.

## *How should I breathe?*

This may seem a little silly, but I am going to remind you to breathe.

We actually breath hold quite often, such as when we're thinking intently or learning a new skill. Once you connect your breath, try to breathe in and out through your nose as much as you can.

However, when you ramp it up a bit with intervals or hills, you may find you need to breathe through your mouth. Once you settle into your rhythm again, check in with your breath, ensuring you are breathing in and out through your nose.

This is most efficient and least drying, and your nose does a wonderful job of keeping all the spring pollen, dust and dirt filtered as you draw the air in.



## *Can I meditate when I walk?*

For sure you can. It is one of the most wonderful ways to do your meditation practice. As you walk, use all of your senses. What are you hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and feeling? It's an awesome way to be in the present moment. This is what energizes me during a walk.

Now, this doesn't happen automatically each time you walk. I would suggest setting an intention of mindfulness as you set out on your walk. On some days, you may just let your mind wander, or your mind may be focussed on solving a particular problem or making a decision. This is all good. You get to decide what type of walk you want it to be by setting your intention at the beginning of each walk.

## *How do I make walking a consistent/daily habit?*

The first way is to not think too much about it having to be a daily habit. This may sound a little counter-intuitive, but if we go into a walking program with the goal of it being a daily habit, we very often go down the "all or nothing" rabbit hole. You may walk Monday and Tuesday and then miss Wednesday and say, "Well, may as well start again next week." Sound familiar? We all do this with various aspects of our lives, but in the health realm, it is all too common.

The key to making it a consistent daily habit is to not try to do this. I'm not saying don't plan for it every day, but cut yourself some slack and celebrate the days that you do get out there for your walk. Your goal may be to walk 3x a week because you are doing other activities.

Whatever your goal is, congratulate yourself each and every time. Notice how you feel, and notice the steps you took to make it happen. You may have to put a reminder on your phone or plan the walk with a friend or have your clothes/shoes ready to go in the morning. Whatever it is, just try to do it again. Every day counts!

If you have any other questions...

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Women's Wellness Community

## *Women's Wellness Community*

For women wanting to rock their "Me Now" years



Getting stronger, feeling happier,  
and reclaiming our awesomeness  
year by year, habit by habit

with *Lorrie Mickelson*



We share and support each other around all things habits-related to our health and happiness. We would love to have you join in.

*Enjoy your spring and summer walking!*



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