



Diabetes and walking

- Walking can help improve insulin sensitivity which makes insulin work better and lowers blood glucose levels.
- Test your blood glucose level before, during (if exercising for a long time) and after walking, especially if you are taking diabetes tablets or insulin. Brisk walking will generally lower your blood glucose level for up to 48 hours afterwards. You may notice a temporary rise in your blood glucose level immediately after walking. This rise is due to the release of hormones during periods of intense muscle activity.
- If you are taking diabetes tablets or insulin you may be at risk of your blood glucose level dropping too low – hypoglycaemia. Make sure you always carry some quickly absorbed glucose, such as jellybeans or glucose tablets, so you can treat hypoglycaemia immediately.
- If you experience hypoglycaemia during or after exercise regularly you should discuss this with your doctor or diabetes educator. Your medication may need to be reviewed.
- Wear good quality, well fitting, shock absorbent, closed-in footwear. If your feet perspire, change your socks after walking.



- Over time, some people with diabetes may experience a loss of sensation in their feet making it difficult to detect wounds and injuries. If you have diabetes check your feet before and after exercise for redness, blisters or injury. If you experience any wounds or abnormalities see your doctor immediately.
- If you experience leg pain, stop and rest. The pain should go away. Inform your doctor if you have not already done so. You should be able to resume your walking program as per your doctor's instructions, however sometimes treatment is required.
- Wear diabetes identification (eg. Medic Alert).

For more information on diabetes contact Diabetes Australia – Vic on 1300 136 588 or visit www.diabetesvic.org.au.

For further information contact

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Preventing Walking Injuries



HEALTH THROUGH SPORT

Facts and Safety Tips
for Walking

Walking preparation

Walking is a popular physical activity that is enjoyable, inexpensive and requires little skill.

Nearly everyone can walk, whether it be for health, fitness, recreation, relaxation or transportation.

Benefits of walking

Regular walking will improve your overall health and fitness. Just 30 minutes a day can increase cardiovascular fitness, bone strength and muscle power. It can also help to prevent heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporosis, depression and lower back pain.

Safety tips for walking

Good preparation is important

- If you are just starting your activity program, it's a good idea to first check with your doctor or health practitioner.
- Always warm up and cool down by walking slowly. Remember to stretch your leg muscles, particularly your calves and thighs. This will help your body prepare for the activity ahead and prevent injury. For stretching advice Smartplay has a Warm Up brochure available to download at www.smartplay.com.au
- Hydrate prior and after walking and consider taking water on longer walks.

Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Start walking gradually, increasing the length of stride and pace as you go.
- Use the right technique. Walk at a steady pace, swing your arms freely and stand as straight as you can. Poor posture or exaggerated movements can contribute to injury.
- Be able to have a conversation whilst walking. If you can't, slow down, as you are probably walking too fast.
- Listen to your body. If you think the level of exercise you are doing is too difficult, it probably is!

Walking surface

- Where possible walk on a clear, smooth, even and reasonably soft surface, like grass. If you must walk on uneven surfaces ensure you take extra care and keep a close watch on where you place your feet with each stride.

Wear the right protective clothing

- Wear light, loose, comfortable clothing.
- In warm weather, protect yourself from the sun with sunglasses, sunscreen and a hat.
- In cool weather, layer clothing so you can easily remove outer layers as your body warms up.
- Wear reflective clothing so you are visible to motorists at night.
- Wear appropriate footwear.

Walking footwear

Everyone has different feet and different ways of walking. It is therefore essential that when walking you wear the right shoes for your feet and ensure they are comfortable and correctly fitted. Wearing the wrong shoes can cause injuries such as foot or shin pain, blisters and injuries to soft tissue. To avoid such injuries, shoes should be professionally fitted.

When choosing the right walking shoes check for:

- Shoes with a rubber outsole for durability and spongy midsole to add extra cushioning and reduce weight. The midsole should run the full length of the shoe.
- Uppers of high quality materials, either leather or breathable mesh, to encourage moisture wicking, and a product that is also lightweight and flexible.
- A comfortable padded heel collar to mould to your foot and minimise heel slippage.
- A firm heel counter (that cups the heel) to give stability for the rear foot of the shoe.
- A well fitting toe box. The toe box should allow ample room and toes should not be tight against any part of the shoe.
- Initial foot comfort as this is a priority and will identify a good fitting shoe.
- Shock absorbency, as this should be the shoe's primary role.
- A lace up shoe, as this is preferable.

For more information on selecting the correct walking shoe, visit www.asics.com.au

Personal safety

- Walk with a friend, group or dog for company and safety. Check with your local council for walking groups available.
- Walk during the day, if possible, or on well-lit streets.
- If there are no pathways, walk on the side of the road facing traffic.
- Plan a safe route that minimises the need to cross busy roads. Use pedestrian crossings where available.
- Always carry some form of identification on you.

Other safety tips

- Avoid walking immediately after meals, if unwell, during the hottest part of the day or in extreme weather conditions.
- Stop and rest for 10 minutes if you experience chest, abdominal, neck or arm pain; tightness; vague discomfort; breathlessness; faintness or have any unusual symptoms. If symptoms persist, see a doctor immediately.

How to identify injuries

- Examine your feet and ankles before and after walking. If you notice red spots, swellings, or other abnormalities, including numbness, tingling or burning, consult your doctor or a podiatrist.
- If you experience an overuse injury*, rest and if symptoms persist see your doctor.

* An overuse injury is wear and tear that results from a repetitive action. Symptoms include persistent muscle pain, soreness, swelling and decreased strength/speed when active.

