

Walk yourself
happy

Heart Foundation Walking



Walker handbook

Eighth edition



Welcome to Heart Foundation Walking



Congratulations on taking steps to increase your physical activity by joining Australia's largest walking network, Heart Foundation Walking. This handbook contains everything you need to get started and help to keep you walking over the longer term.

Research shows being regularly active throughout life is one of the most effective ways to improve and protect your heart health, and walking is one of Australia's favourite ways of being physically active.

Walking in a group has even more benefits, as it helps you stay motivated, meet new friends and feel connected in your local community. We like to say "Walk yourself happy", because we know walking can help boost confidence, help you feel alert and reduce stress.

In 2018, we celebrate our 23rd anniversary and since 1995, more than 85,000 Australians have enjoyed the benefits of Heart Foundation Walking.

Heart Foundation Walking is one way we promote lifestyle changes to fight cardiovascular disease – Australia's biggest killer. We are grateful for the support and funding for Heart Foundation Walking from the Australian Government and the Queensland Government.

Thank you for joining Heart Foundation Walking and I trust you will enjoy all its benefits.

Adj Prof John G Kelly AM
Chief Executive Officer
National Heart Foundation of Australia

Proudly supported by



Australian Government



Queensland Government

Walking in a group helps you stay motivated, meet new friends and feel connected... Evidence suggests good social support can help safeguard against heart disease and stroke.



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Why walking?

Walking is the number one activity most Australian adults do on a regular basis.

Walking:

- suits people of all ages and fitness levels
- can be done just about anywhere
- is free!
- has very low risk of injury
- doesn't require any special equipment or training.

Our Heart Foundation Walking groups make walking a social activity. When you walk in a group, you can talk while you walk and get to know your neighbours and neighbourhood.

Being active on a regular basis is a great way to look after your heart health.

Regular physical activity helps:

- reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke and dementia
- manage weight, blood pressure and cholesterol
- prevent and control diabetes
- reduce your risk of developing some cancers
- maintain your bone density, reducing your risk of osteoporosis and fractures
- improve balance and coordination, reducing your risk of falls and other injuries.

It also helps you reduce stress and feel more alert, and boost self-confidence and mood.



FROM OUR WALKERS:

"I have made new friends and we socialise outside of walking, my health has improved, I can walk safely and always have a laugh."

Walk yourself
happy

What is Heart Foundation Walking?

Heart Foundation Walking is Australia's largest free walking network with walking groups led by volunteer Walk Organisers, and a virtual community of walkers who track their activity via our Heart Foundation Walking app.

Community Walking Groups

Walking groups can be any size and walk at various times, days, distances and levels of difficulty. Everyone is encouraged to walk at their own pace.

Volunteer Walk Organisers decide the route, times and days for the walks, act as the main point of contact for group members and help the Heart Foundation stay in touch with all our walkers.

Walking solo

You can be part of Heart Foundation Walking by downloading our free app, available for Apple or Android. The app will help you keep track of your steps, connect to health information and take part in special campaigns and events online.



FROM A WALK ORGANISER:

"I'm always receiving positive feedback on how the walks are helping people in the community with issues such as social isolation, confidence levels, meeting new people and getting fitter. I feel very privileged to be part of this program."

FROM OUR WALKERS:

"Walking is really something special. Sometimes you meet other people who are walking around and you start talking - it's great."



"I started posting every time I was doing a walk on social media and found people commenting publicly and private messaging me. The feedback was really spurring me on and now, I have friends in every state walking each day and challenging each other, holding each other accountable".
Virtual walker, Craig Riley

"I feel fantastic! I have the motivation to get up and go and am doing things that I could not do before, and it has turned my life around".

Marg from the Ellendale Walkers, Tasmania

Why join a Heart Foundation Walking group?

Heart Foundation Walking is designed to help people enjoy regular physical activity.

The program provides:

- an easy, accessible way to stay physically active
- social contact and community spirit
- a safe way to be healthy
- regular newsletters and health information
- encouragement and incentives to stay motivated
- invitations to special walk events.

Member benefits

Walker Recognition Scheme. The Walker Recognition Scheme is designed to help motivate Walkers to start walking and keep walking.

Participant newsletter. The newsletter includes updates on the program, information about physical activity and heart health, healthy recipes and news from groups all around Australia.

Track your progress online. Walking group members can access their password-protected online profile for their walking numbers. Solo walkers can track their steps using our Heart Foundation Walking app - which syncs to Apple Health, Google Fit or Fitbit.



Only 9 more walks until you reach your next achievement of 50 walks!



Milestone	Recognition received
25 group walks	Certificate \$5.00 voucher for Heart Foundation Walking Merchandise
50 group walks	Certificate \$10.00 voucher for Heart Foundation Walking Merchandise
100 group walks	Certificate Commemorative pin \$15.00 voucher for Heart Foundation Walking Merchandise
200 group walks	Certificate Commemorative pin \$20.00 voucher for Heart Foundation Walking Merchandise
500 group walks	Certificate Commemorative pin \$25.00 voucher for Heart Foundation Walking Merchandise
1000 group walks	Certificate Commemorative pin 1000 walk club member Polo Shirt

Note: The Walker Recognition Scheme is only available to Walkers registered with a Heart Foundation Walking group. Only walks conducted with a Heart Foundation Walking group are recorded as part of the Walker Recognition Scheme.

To be included in the Walker Recognition Scheme, you must tick the Walker Recognition Scheme box when you register. Solo walkers are rewarded for reaching step milestones through campaigns on our Heart Foundation Walking app.

For more information visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au.

“It was those little incentives that kept me going and aiming for the next goal until I made walking a part of my lifestyle. We’ve talked about this in our group a number of times and everyone agrees”.





Joining Heart Foundation Walking

Simple steps to joining a group

1. Find a group

Go to walking.heartfoundation.org.au, visit the 'walking in a group' page, and select your state and local area. Alternatively you can call 13 11 12 (local call cost) and ask about groups near you.

2. Register

Once you have found a group online, click the 'Register' button and complete the form. You can also complete a form from the volunteer Walk Organiser and they will post it to us.

3. Start walking!

Have fun and enjoy all the benefits of being regularly active with a Heart Foundation Walking group. If you haven't already contacted the Walk Organiser, try to arrive a few minutes early to your first walk and introduce yourself to them.

Wear comfortable shoes and clothing, a hat and sunscreen, and take a drink bottle.



Starting your own group

If there are no walking groups in your area or you're keen to start your own, we'd love you to join us:

1. Decide when, where and how often you'd like your group to walk.
2. Go to walking.heartfoundation.org.au/walking/start-your-own-group
3. Complete the registration form to 'Become a Walk Organiser' - you'll be asked to select a Local Coordinator, who will be your local program contact.
4. You'll be sent a link to an online training session - complete the training and get ready to walk!

Walking solo

You can track your activity on our Heart Foundation Walking app to:

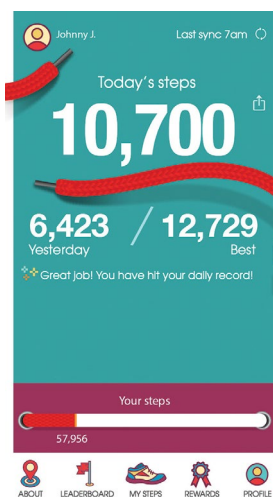
- help set goals and track your progress either in steps or minutes of physical activity (or both!)
- be part of our Heart Foundation Walking community if there isn't a group at a convenient time or location.

Download our free Heart Foundation Walking app from your app store to get started.

If you have an iPhone, the app will sync to your Apple Health app (all iPhones have this app, look for the red heart). If you have an Android phone, the app will sync to the free Google Fit app. If you have a Fitbit, the app will sync to your Fitbit app.

Once you're using the app, you'll be invited to take part in events and campaigns throughout the year to encourage you to build up your step count. You will also receive our Walking enews.

If you're already part of a Heart Foundation Walking group, you'll have to set up a new registration if you'd like to use the app.





“Try to accumulate 2.5–5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity every week.”

Making the most of your walks

Remember, any exercise is better than none so if you're starting, you can gradually build up to the recommended amount. Many people start off too vigorously and then give up because they find it too demanding. Common sense is your best guide.

The following recommendations released by the Federal Department of Health are for adults and you may need to talk to your health professional before you start.

How much activity is enough?

Aim to be active on most, preferably all, days of the week. Accumulate 150 to 300 minutes (2.5–5 hours) of moderate intensity activity or 75 to 150 minutes (1.25–2.5 hours) of vigorous intensity activity, or an equivalent combination of both, each week.

What is moderate intensity activity?

This requires some effort, but still allows you to speak easily while undertaking the activity, e.g. walking briskly.

What is vigorous intensity activity?

This requires more effort and makes you breathe harder and faster ('huff and puff').

A good general guide is to do a little more than you are accustomed to and increase the amount and frequency gradually.

Increase your stamina. If you rarely do any physical activity (e.g. walk the dog once a week, or play an occasional game of golf), start by walking for 10 or 15 minutes, three or four times a week at a comfortable level.



After a few weeks, you should find you can walk a little further and faster, and may want to gradually increase the frequency to five, six or seven times a week.

Listen to your body. Another way to judge how fast to walk is to rate how you feel on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 is resting and 10 is working very, very hard). To get a health benefit without pushing yourself too hard, your walking should be somewhere between three (moderate) and six (somewhat hard).

Walk at your own pace. Many Heart Foundation Walking groups include a shorter alternative route for slower or less fit Walkers. Take advantage of this if you need to. Remember to always walk at your own pace – it's not a race.

Warming up and stretching

When you arrive for your walk, there are a few simple things you can do to prepare your body. A gentle warm up followed by some simple stretching is a good way to improve flexibility, prepare muscles for being active and prevent injuries. You might like to consider including a warm up and stretch at the start of every walk and, when possible, at the end.

Warming up. Before setting off with your group take about five minutes to allow circulation to increase gradually and muscles to warm up. You and your group, can do this by walking on the spot, or doing the first five minutes of the walk at a slower pace. Some people warm up by walking from home to the meeting point for their walk. A light sweat is a good indication your body is warm.

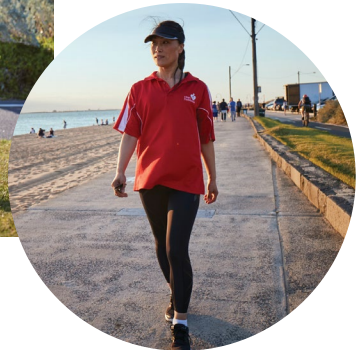


“A gentle warm up followed by some simple stretching is a good way to improve flexibility, prepare muscles for being active and may prevent injuries.”

Stretching. Stretching increases flexibility, eases muscular aches and pains, and may help prevent injuries. When stretching, remember:

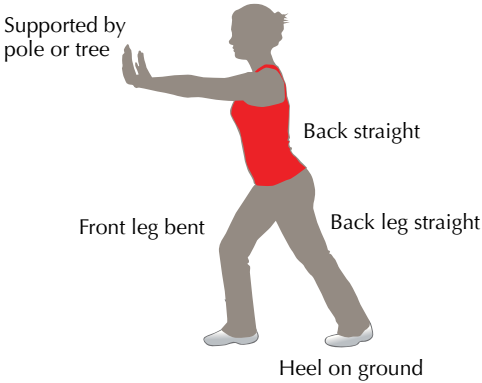
- warm up your muscles before stretching
- stretch slowly and ease in and out of each posture
- hold each stretch for 10–30 seconds
- try to stay steady to avoid muscle injury
- stretching should never be painful. Stretch to the point of mild discomfort (so you can ‘feel it’), but not pain. Pain indicates you are pushing yourself too hard
- for maximum benefit, repeat each stretch three to four times
- stretch the same number of times on each side.

Some example stretches are shown on the next page.

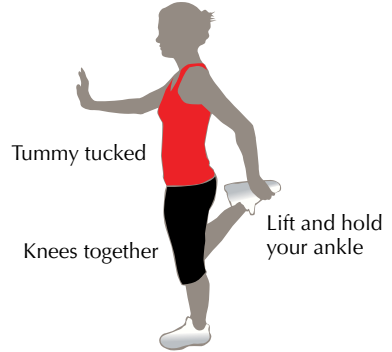


Examples of stretches

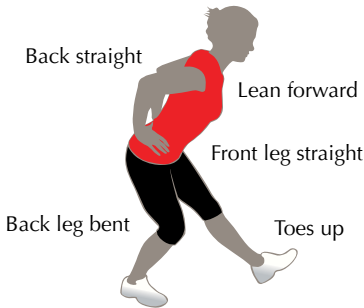
Calf stretch



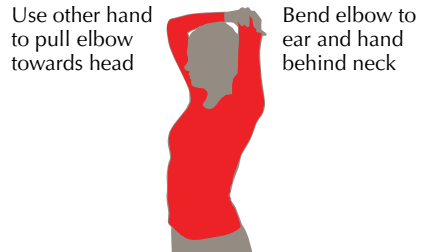
Quadricep stretch



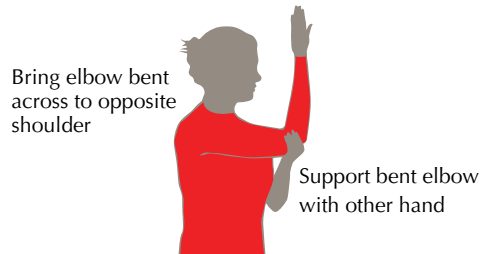
Hamstring stretch



Tricep stretch



Shoulder stretch





Essential information

Important safety tips

1. Seek appropriate medical advice

If you have a medical condition and/or you are significantly increasing your level of activity by undertaking Heart Foundation Walking activities, you must ask your health professional whether it is safe for you to participate.

We recognise this is inconvenient for some Walkers, especially those who are already active. However, it is an essential part of the program's risk management strategy and will help to ensure all Walkers have a safe, enjoyable experience. Please remember the Walk Organiser is a volunteer who facilitates the walk – it is not their role to provide medical advice or an individual fitness program. If your health or circumstances change, you must see your health professional to confirm it is still safe for you to participate.

Please note for privacy reasons, you do not need to provide your medical information to the Heart Foundation.

2. Manage medical conditions carefully

If you have a medical condition that could be affected by activity (like heart disease, angina, high blood pressure, diabetes or asthma), you must carefully monitor any symptoms (e.g. breathlessness, low blood sugar or pain) that may be made worse. If you are on medication for your condition, ensure you have taken your medication correctly before undertaking activity and/or carry as appropriate (discuss this with your doctor), and walk at your own pace, being careful not to overdo it.

It is always recommended you speak with your health professional before starting any new physical activity.

For any health enquiries and questions about heart disease or dietary information, contact our Heart Foundation Helpline on 13 11 12 and/or contact your health professional.

3. Stop if you need to

Naturally, we want to encourage you to be as active as possible. However, you should be familiar with the warning signs and know when to stop the activity. Please remember:

- to seek medical help if you become breathless or uncomfortable while doing any activity. Slow down, stop and discuss with your doctor as soon as you can.
- if you have been prescribed angina-relieving medication, carry it with you when you are being active and follow your doctor's advice for its use
- to avoid being active if you have an acute illness (e.g. flu or bronchitis) or injury (e.g. sprained ankle or pulled muscle) or have had recent surgery. Ask your doctor's advice about returning to your walking group
- finally, to avoid being active when it is extremely hot, cold or humid. It is also wise to avoid walking during the hottest part of the day.

4. Know the warning signs of heart attack and what to do

It is important that all Walkers know the warning signs of heart attack and the action to take if anyone in your group is experiencing warning signs. Each year there are approximately 55,000 heart attacks in Australia – that is 150 every day or 1 every 10 minutes. Heart attacks claim one Australian life every 53 minutes and more than 50% of heart attack deaths occur before the person reaches hospital.

“Avoid being active when it is extremely hot, cold or humid. It is also wise to avoid walking during the hottest part of the day.”





Call '000'
Your best chance
of survival
It's OK to call

At a glance

Take care while walking by:

- seeking appropriate medical advice
- managing medical conditions carefully
- stopping if you need to
- not overdoing it
- being prepared for walking
- observing appropriate considerations when walking with children or dogs.

With heart attacks, every minute counts. The sooner you recognise the warning signs and call Triple Zero (000), the less damage is done to the heart muscle and the greater the chance of survival.

The warning signs of heart attack:

- Discomfort or pain in the centre of your chest:
 - heaviness, tightness or pressure
 - the discomfort may spread.
- Discomfort in other parts of your upper body:
 - arm/s, shoulder/s, neck, jaw or back.
- You may also feel:
 - short of breath, nauseous, a cold sweat, dizzy or light-headed.
- Someone having a heart attack may:
 - appear pale
 - look like they are having trouble breathing
 - look uncomfortable
 - be sweating a lot.

Warning Signs – what to do

1. **STOP and rest now**

- Help the person to immediately stop what they are doing and rest.

2. **TALK tell someone how you feel**

- Ask the person to tell you what they are feeling.
- If their symptoms are severe, get worse quickly or have lasted for 10 minutes.

3. **CALL Triple Zero (000) now! and chew 300mg aspirin, unless you have an allergy to aspirin or your doctor has told you not to take it**

- Ask for an ambulance. Don't hang up. Wait for the operator's instructions.



Will you recognise your heart attack?



Do you feel any

In one or more of your

You may also feel

Yes

1 STOP and rest now

2 TALK tell someone how you feel

If you take angina medicine

- Take a dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Still have symptoms? Take another dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Symptoms won't go away?

Are your symptoms severe or getting worse?

or

Have your symptoms lasted 10 minutes?

Yes

3 CALL 000* and chew 300mg aspirin, unless you have an allergy to aspirin or your doctor has told you not to take it

*Triple Zero

- Ask for an ambulance.
- Don't hang up.
- Wait for the operator's instructions.

*If calling Triple Zero (000) does not work on your mobile phone, try 112.

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HF/NTBS/1/JUN/17

A copy of this action plan can be downloaded or ordered from www.heartattackfacts.org.au or by calling 13 11 12.



5. Don't overdo it

It can be tempting to do too much, especially if others in the group are fitter than you. Try to resist this temptation. Listen to your body and walk at your own pace. Your Walk Organiser will ensure you are not left walking on your own.

When you start physical activity, you may experience some muscle soreness for a few days after the first few walks. Don't be too worried about this. However, see your doctor about sharp pains or aches which last for more than a couple of days.

6. Be prepared for walking

For your comfort and safety, you will need to:

- wear comfortable, lightweight shoes and clothing that breathes. In cool weather, dress in 'layers' (rather than one bulky jacket) so you can remove outer clothing as you start to warm up
- be sun-smart – wear a hat, sunglasses and a broad spectrum SPF50+ sunscreen, even if walking in the early morning or late afternoon
- drink water before, during and after your walk; even on cooler days it is important to stay hydrated.

7. Walking with dogs

Many people want to take their dogs along to their walking group, which can be beneficial for their commitment and motivation.

For the safety and comfort of all of those participating in the walk, dog owners must ensure:

- the walking group is a dog friendly group (if you are unsure, check with the Walk Organiser)
- the dog is wearing a valid ID and registration tag
- the dog is kept on a leash at all times



"In cool weather, dress in 'layers'... so that you can remove outer clothing as you start to warm up."

- they are prepared and able to keep physical control of the dog at all times
- they abide by any regulations in the area regarding dogs
- they are prepared to clean up after their dog.

Dog owners are solely responsible for any injury or damage their dog might cause to any person or property, as indicated in the Walker Terms and Conditions.

If issues arise with a particular animal's behaviour, the Walk Organiser may ask the owner not to bring the dog to future walks.

8. Walking with children

Some Heart Foundation Walking groups are especially for 'Parents with Prams', with the walking route planned to be pram friendly; however, most groups welcome everyone.

If you're not sure, contact your local Walk Organiser to see if their walking route is right for you.



FROM OUR WALKERS:

"Since 1997 I have been committed to walking 3 times a week... I rarely miss it. I have made good friends over the years and enjoy the social aspects as well as the exercise."

"I feel fantastic! I have the motivation to get up and go and am doing things that I could not do before, and it has turned my life around."



Overcoming common hurdles

There are lots of excuses to avoid being regularly active - here are a few tips to help you overcome some of the common hurdles.

“I find physical activity boring.”

Walking with a friend or a group can make physical activity fun and interesting. Joining Heart Foundation Walking is a great way to do this. Some groups vary their route or hold special events. Make sure you celebrate your achievements and those of your group members.

“It will be too fast.”

Make sure you always walk at your own pace. Start at a level that suits your fitness and abilities, and aim to build up slowly.

“It’s too expensive.”

Joining Heart Foundation Walking is free. Walking is free, can be done almost anywhere and all you need is comfortable shoes and clothing.

“It’s too difficult with young children.”

Take your children with you. Babies and toddlers can ride in a pram and older children can ride bikes or walk with the group. Some Heart Foundation Walking groups are especially for ‘Parents with Prams’. Alternatively, you could meet with a group after dropping your children to school or preschool. It’s a great way to meet other parents.

“I don’t have the time.”

Make walking part of your day. Walk to public transport, use the stairs, or park further away from the shops. Joining Heart Foundation Walking will help you make being active a regular part of your day. Remember, as little as 30 minutes of daily walking will give you a health benefit.



You are never too old to start being active and never too old to gain the benefits. Heart Foundation Walking has members in their eighties and older. It helps to find a group with others of a similar age – or start one with your friends or neighbours.

“I’m too old.”

Maybe you are already active. However, many Australians think they are active enough when they are not. Everyday light activities (e.g. casual walking or grocery shopping) are not enough. The benefits of physical activity depend on routinely doing an activity at a moderate intensity such as brisk walking for at least 10 minutes in duration, aiming for at least 30 minutes on five days each week. When we are busy, being active is often the first thing to go. Make physical activity a priority in your day.

“I already do enough activity.”

Download our Heart Foundation Walking app and we’ll help you stay motivated.

“I don’t have anyone to be active with.”





Frequently asked questions

Can I be a walking group member AND track my activity online?

Yes! You can be part of Heart Foundation Walking AND track your steps as an individual walker via our Heart Foundation Walking app. See page 9 for information.

What if I forget my password?

If you can't remember your password, select 'Lost Password' and you will be prompted to enter your email address. You will then receive an email with instructions to re-set it.

Can I be in more than one group?

Yes, but please notify us so that we can register and reward you appropriately.

How can I find out how many walks I've done?

Log on to your online profile at walking.heartfoundation.org.au. Here you can keep track of your walks, as well as update any of your personal details such as your address, contact phone number.

Does the Heart Foundation offer public liability insurance for Walkers?

Walkers are not covered by public liability insurance. By registering as a Walker, Walkers agree to enter Heart Foundation Walking at their own risk and not to hold the Heart Foundation, government and other agencies or the Local Coordinator's organisation responsible for any loss, damage, expense or personal injury sustained from participation. Each Walker also agrees that they are aware of and understand the additional risks that dogs may cause, they voluntarily accept those risks and acknowledge that the Heart Foundation is excluding all liability for injuries or damage caused as a result of including dogs in Heart Foundation Walking.



Where can I find the Walker Terms and Conditions?

The current Walker Terms and Conditions can be found at walking.heartfoundation.org.au/terms-and-conditions.

What if I want to leave Heart Foundation Walking?

Log on to your online profile at walking.heartfoundation.org.au. Here you can update your personal details, track your walks, and exit Heart Foundation Walking if you are leaving the program. Please also notify your Walk Organiser.

Will I be asked to pay or make donations to the Heart Foundation?

This is a free program so everyone can join. There is no obligation to donate or raise funds, but donations are welcome and will help us continue our lifesaving research and health education work. If you request to receive the Heart Foundation Walking newsletter, fundraising information will occasionally be included.

If you would like to make a donation, or volunteer to help the Heart Foundation, please telephone 13 11 12 for more information. Your support will make a difference.

Why does the registration process request so much information?

The information requested on the registration form is essential to allow us to administer and evaluate the program. If you have any concerns about providing any particular information, please call the Heart Foundation on 13 11 12.





Is any research being conducted through Heart Foundation Walking?

We are committed to thoroughly evaluating Heart Foundation Walking. Mail, email, telephone or face-to-face surveys may be conducted from time to time.

Participation in research is not compulsory and you have the right to refuse to take part, or withdraw at any point, without penalty. However, we value your views and input and recognise that good evaluation can assist us to deliver a better program.

What if there is no Heart Foundation Walking group in my area?

You might like to consider starting your own Heart Foundation Walking group by becoming a volunteer Walk Organiser, you only need one other person to start a group.

The Heart Foundation and your Local Coordinator will provide resources and assistance to start, promote and maintain your group. If there is no Host Organisation with a Local Coordinator in your area, you may like to approach your local shire or council to see if they are interested in becoming involved with Heart Foundation Walking.

You can also download our Heart Foundation Walking app to track your steps and connect to our health information.

What if I have more questions?

Ask your Walk Organiser, Local Coordinator or contact us at walking@heartfoundation.org.au or call 13 11 12. For questions about your own health, please consult your health professional.



Merchandise



T-shirts



Polo top



Hoodie



Sport cap



Sling bag back pack



Drink/sport bottle



Shoelaces



Fit Walk pedometer



Socks



'Hearty' unisex beanie

Please visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au for our full range of merchandise. Items are subject to availability.

**Heart Foundation
HELPLINE
13 11 12**

**Free heart health information and
support is a phone call away.**

**heartfoundation.org.au/support
health@heartfoundation.org.au**



If you need an interpreter,
call **131 450** and ask for
the Heart Foundation.

Notes

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Contact us

walking@heartfoundation.org.au

13 11 12

walking.heartfoundation.org.au

Facebook: @HFWalking

Instagram: @Heartfoundationwalking



If you need an interpreter,
call **131 450** and ask for
the Heart Foundation.

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