

STEP TO IT: WHY WALKING MATTERS

A joint initiative between **Alzheimer's Australia** and the **Heart Foundation**

**TALK ALZHEIMER'S
WALK AUSTRALIA**



WALKING IS IMPORTANT

FOR YOUR BRAIN

- Promotes healthy blood vessels, improving blood flow to the brain.
- Stimulates the growth of new brain cells and connections between them, contributing to what's known as a 'brain reserve'.
- Helps protect against cognitive decline and dementia.
- Regular walking can improve memory and thinking functions.

AND YOUR HEART

- Reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Assists in the management of weight, blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Helps to maintain bone mineral density.
- Helps to prevent and control diabetes.



Walking is one of the most basic forms of movement and can be a powerful protector against illness and disease.

It's inexpensive! You don't need fancy equipment, no need to sign up to a 12 month contract, and best of all, you walk on your terms, at times and in places of your choosing.

Walking with a friend, a group of people or your dog may increase your enjoyment and motivate you to walk faster or for longer. Even if you are walking on your own, it can be a great way to meet your community.

Our environment loves walkers and walkers should love their environment! Walking is carbon emission free, so we can feel comfortable that we are not impacting on our increasingly fragile world. Walking does not produce air or noise pollution (unless you're chatting with a friend loudly as you walk). In 2011, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that those using public



open space were three times more likely to meet the recommended levels of physical activity.¹

Walking could lead to a longer life. Being physically inactive can take three to five years off your life.² Instead of driving, try some active transport by hopping on the bus and getting off a few stops early or walk all the way to work, the shops, school, or to visit friends. If more Australians were physically active for just 30mins a day, the Australian healthcare system could save \$1.5billion annually.

We know finding the time to exercise can be tricky. That's the beauty of incorporating it into your daily activities. Studies show that those who incorporate walking into their everyday commute to work or school are more likely to achieve their physical activity requirements.

Walking has a positive impact on work performance. It helps us all to concentrate on everyday tasks, clears the mind and can make us feel really happy.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Any kind of physical activity is better than none at all. Start by doing a little and gradually build up to the recommended amount. If you are already active, that's great, keep it up!

The *National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines* recommend activity on most, preferably all days, every week.

- Accumulate 2½ to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity or 1¼ to 2½ hours of vigorous intensity physical activity each week. Or in simpler terms; 30 to 45 minutes of solid walking (not strolling) most days of the week.
- Supplement this with some muscle strengthening activities on at least two days each week: yoga, dancing, resistance activities and hiking are good examples.

Reduce sitting time

For the first time the Physical Activity Guidelines include recommendations to limit sedentary behaviour – a move which reflects growing evidence about the harm of too much sitting.

Minimise the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting. Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

While participating in regular physical activity cannot guarantee you won't develop dementia or cardiovascular disease, there is very good evidence to show that regular physical exercise will reduce your risk.





WHAT CAN YOU DO TO GET WALKING?

- Take regular breaks at work or at home for a brisk walk.
- Meet up with a friend for a coffee and a walk.
- Take your dog for a walk.
- Park away from the shopping centre and walk the extra distance. Wear your walking shoes and sneak in an extra lap or two around the centre.
- Get involved in one of the 1,300 Heart Foundation Walking groups or start one of your own.
- Wear a pedometer and see how many steps you take a day. Try to increase this number.
- Play your favourite music while walking or listen to a podcast or a talking book.



WHAT ARE WE DOING?

Alzheimer's Australia's Your Brain Matters dementia risk reduction program promotes the 5 simple steps to maximise your brain health. Included is the importance of being physically active to help reduce the risk of developing dementia.

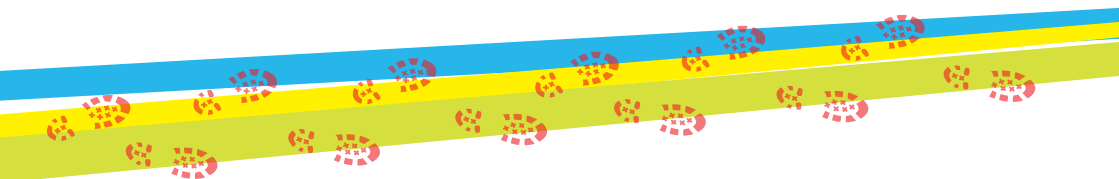
- Step 1: Look After Your Heart
- Step 2: Be Physically Active
- Step 3: Mentally Challenge Your Brain
- Step 4: Follow a Healthy Diet
- Step 5: Enjoy Social Activity

Alzheimer's Australia delivers education on the 5 Simple Steps to all parts of the Australian community.

Our very own App, **BrainyApp™**, has been developed to track and rate brain health as well as encourage users to improve their lifestyles including increasing physical activity levels. FREE download for Apple or Android devices. Visit yourbrainmatters.org.au or go to the App Store or Google Play and search for 'BrainyApp'.

The **Heart Foundation** is working towards creating healthy environments that encourage and support more people to walk, more often, by:

- Encouraging state and local governments to consider pedestrians when building roads and residential developments creating communities where walking is accessible, comfortable and safe.
- Creating a walkability checklist that you can use to assess your neighbourhood and how friendly it is to walkers. You can then use this information to talk to your local council about changes you'd like to see. For example, fixing broken paths and providing more lighting for safer streets at night. Call 1300 362 787 to order your checklist.
- Coordinating **Heart Foundation Walking** – Australia's largest FREE walking network of over 1,300 walking groups. Heart Foundation Walking provides training, support and great resources to start a walking group whether it is in a workplace or general community.
- Partnering with Alzheimer's Australia and ACH Group, to extend Heart Foundation Walking to provide more support for people living with dementia and their carers.



To find out other ways you can maximise your brain health visit
yourbrainmatters.org.au

 YourBrainMatters  YourBrainMatters  @UrBrainMatters

National Dementia Helpline **1800 100 500**

Heart Foundation
Walking

For more information on Heart Foundation Walking visit
heartfoundation.org.au/walking

 NationalHeartFoundation  @HeartAust

Heart Foundation, Health Information Service **1300 362 787**



For language assistance call the
Translating and Interpreting Service **131 450**

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011
2. Wen C.P., Wu X.F., Stressing harms of physical inactivity to promote exercise. *The Lancet*. 2012

Alzheimer's Australia's Your Brain Matters program is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Chronic Disease Prevention and Service Improvement Fund