

Heart Foundation

Walking



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Queensland
Government



Walking in Nature



We acknowledge that the Heart Foundation is spread across many of our traditional lands. We pay respect to all traditional owners of these lands and those who under custodial law are charged with nurturing and protecting country. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.



Background

In 2017-2018 Australian adults aged 18-64:

- Only 15% met the guidelines for both physical activity and muscle strengthening
- Almost 2/3 undertook 150 minutes or more of exercise in the last week.

For adults aged 65 years and over:

- Almost three quarters (71%) engaged in some form of exercise in the last week
- Just over a quarter (26.1%) achieved 30 minutes or more of activity on 5 or more days¹

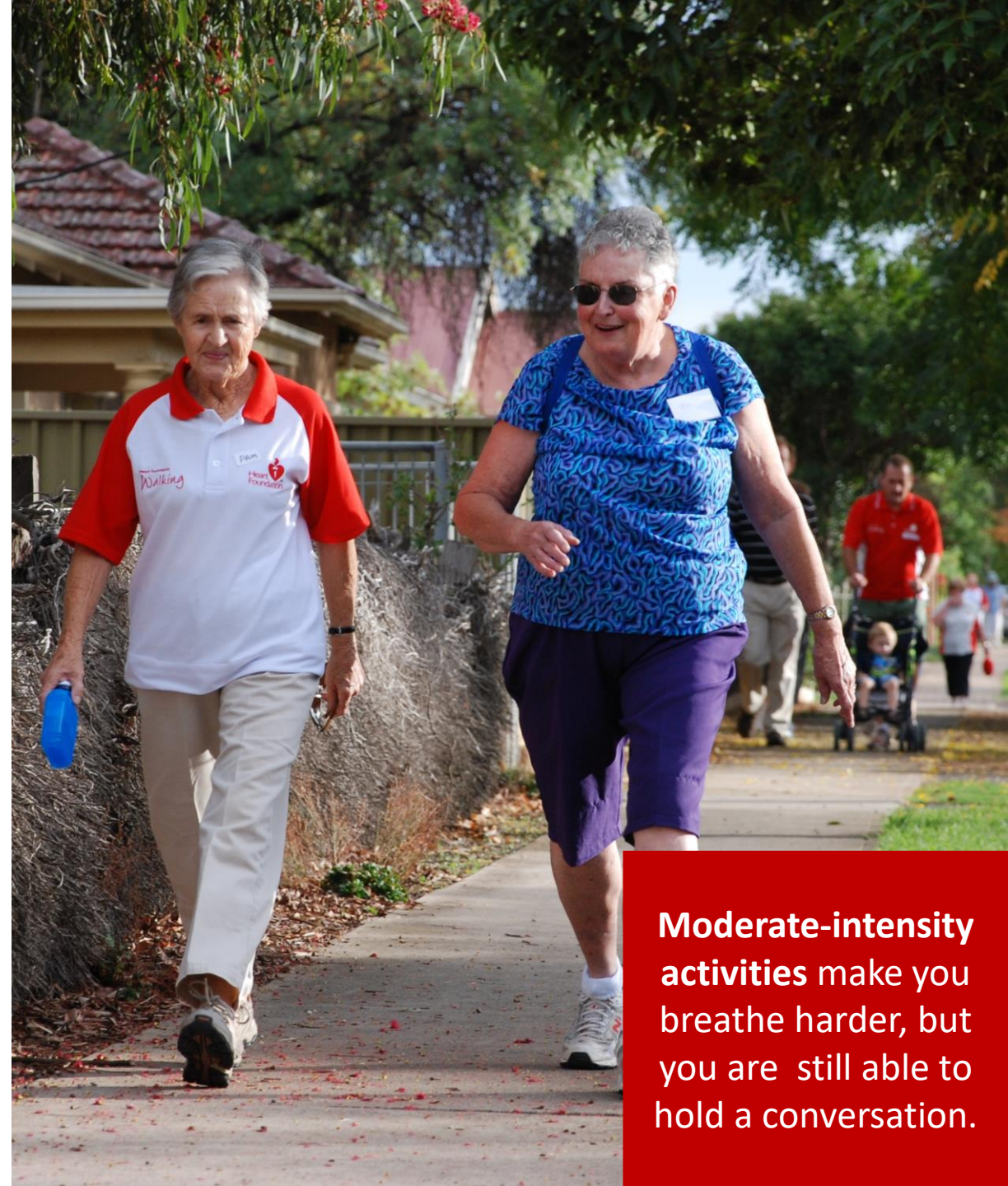


In 2015, over 80% of Heart Foundation Walkers surveyed completed 150 minutes physical activity²

How much activity?

- Aim for 150 - 300 minutes of moderate or 75 - 150 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each week.
- Any physical activity is better than none. It's fine to start with a little and build up.
- Be active on most, preferably all, days of the week
- Do muscle-strengthening activities on at least 2 days each week.

No matter how active you are, it's also important to sit less³



Moderate-intensity activities make you breathe harder, but you are still able to hold a conversation.

Why be Active?

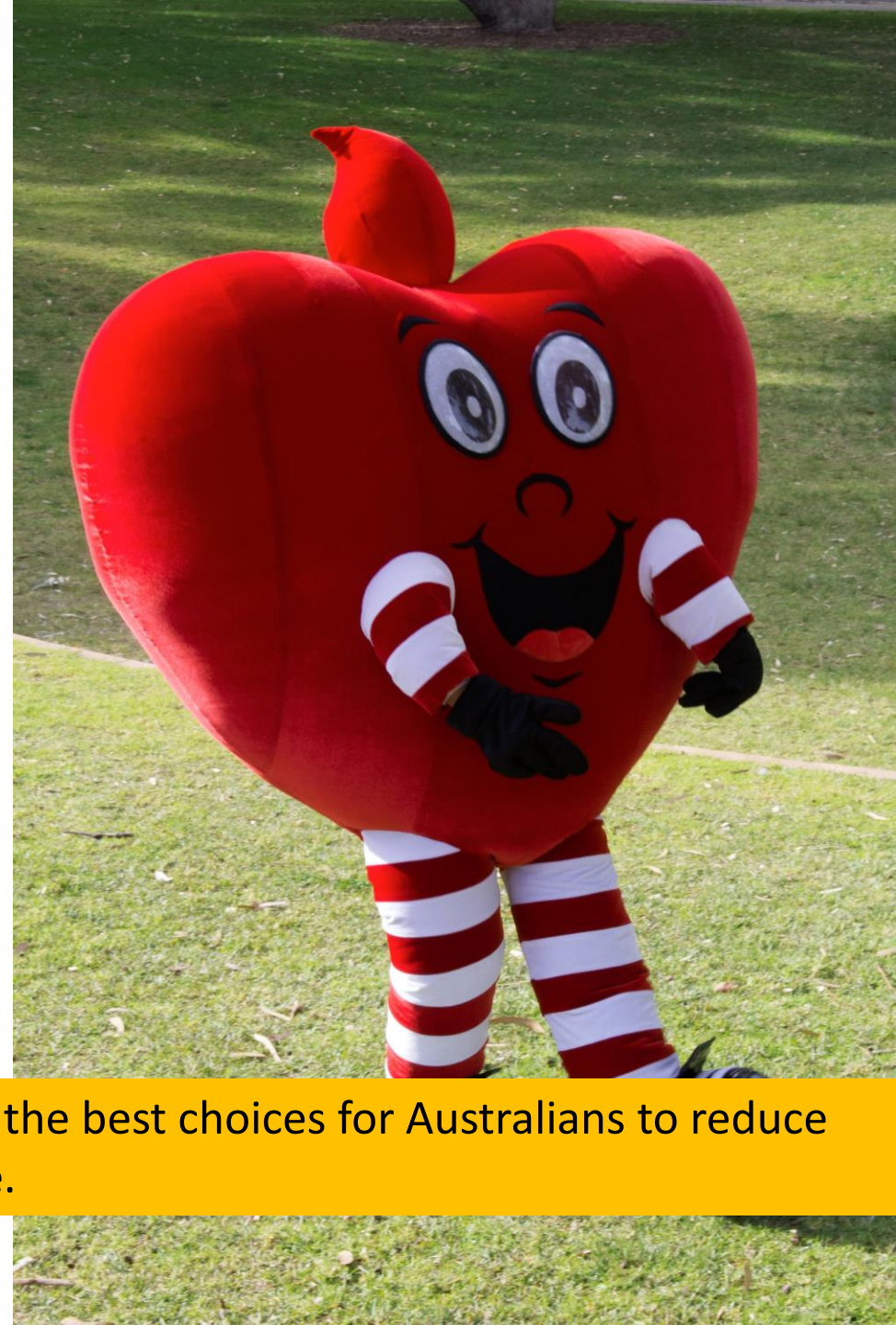
Being physically inactive is one of the risk factors for heart disease.

Regular physical activity

- makes you less likely to have a heart attack or develop heart disease.
- Helps control risk factors like high blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Can help prevent and manage over 20 chronic conditions including some cancers, type 2 diabetes and depression.

If you have heart disease, physical activity is important to help you manage it.⁴

Regular walking is one of the best choices for Australians to reduce their risk of heart disease.



Walking and Nature

- Parks provide an excellent opportunity for people to relax and engage in outdoor activities. ⁵
- Being in or viewing nature can be beneficial and even ten minutes can have a positive effect on wellbeing. ^{5,6}
- People are more likely to be active if they live near parks and playgrounds.
- For older adults being closer to outdoor spaces is linked with greater life satisfaction. ⁷
- Exercising in natural environments can positively affect self-esteem and mood. ⁶



Walking in Nature Physical Health

More green space in neighbourhoods encourages people to walk and engage in activities on a weekly basis.

Adults who live closer to parks in urban spaces are more likely to have a lower BMI than adults who live far away.

- Access to local parks and outdoor spaces can contribute to active lifestyle behaviours including:
 - Active transport
 - Supporting pet ownership
 - Increased community participation.⁷



Walking in Nature Mental Health

- Living close to greens spaces can help increase individual resilience and life coping skills. ⁷
- Spending time in nature is linked with lower stress levels and can help lessen the symptoms of depression and anxiety. ⁸
- Exercising in local parks has the added reported benefits of improved:
 - Relaxation
 - Stress management
 - Ability to disconnect from life stressors. ⁷



Motivations

A study conducted in NSW on Park usage found that walkers visited the parks for:

- Rest/ relaxation/ reviving
- Experiencing nature
- Being outdoors
- Physical exercise
- Being active
- Sightseeing
- Observing flora/ fauna
- Maintaining health⁵



Ways to enjoy the great outdoors



Explore your environment

- Planning a trip to a national park on a weekend is a great way to get to know the natural secrets of your area and get some incidental exercise
- Take a friend, take the kids or plan to explore on your own
- Pack a healthy lunch, water and something to carry your rubbish

Ways to enjoy the great outdoors

Add a nature walk for your walking group

- Plan a nature walk to add variety to your group
- Join another walking group to meet new people and explore new green spaces around you
- Change your walking route to go through local parks



Ways to enjoy the great outdoors



Go on a photography walk

- Take your camera with you and break up the walk
- The extra breaks will cater for more fitness levels
- Keep a list of the types of photos that you would like to take
- You'll get great photos and exercise without even noticing the steps you've done.⁶

Ways to enjoy the great outdoors

Do a mindful walk

Engaging our senses when walking may help relax our mind and body plus help connect us to the natural world ⁹

1. Connect to the present moment before starting (through sensing your breath)
2. Begin walking at a slightly slower than normal pace
3. Stop and bring your awareness to your senses
4. When your attention drifts, gently guide your attention back to what you are doing
5. Allow yourself to come to a gentle stop when finished. ^{9,10,11}



Ways to enjoy the great outdoors

Take the time for a flora and fauna walk

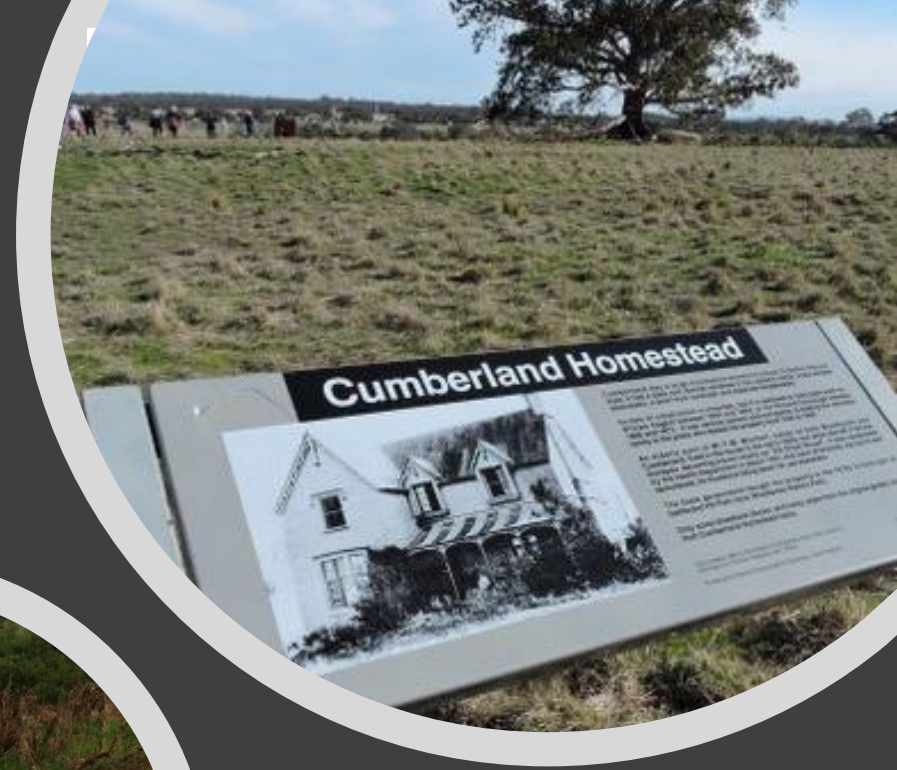
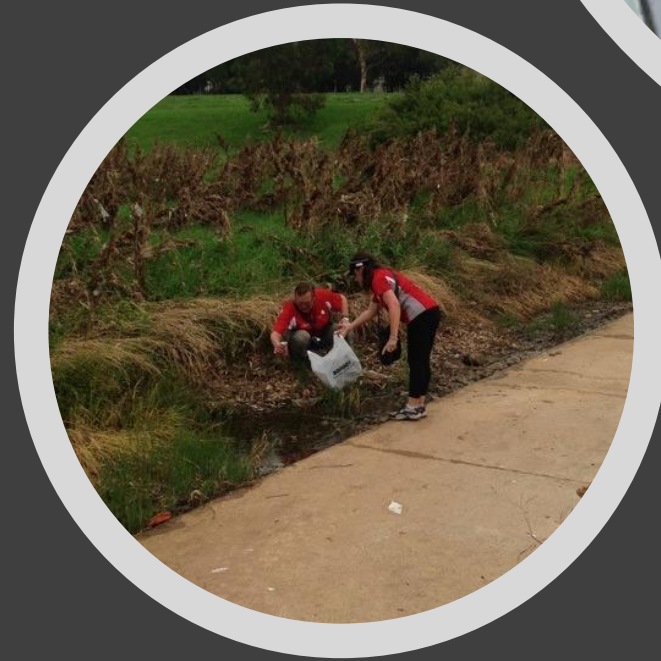
- Australia has approximately 800 native bird species and iconic native animals to enjoy
- Find a guided nature walk or explore your local park
- Use apps or books that help you identify native birds or plants
- Tips for nature walking:
 - Take your time
 - Be quiet
 - Avoid wearing bright clothing



Ways to enjoy the great outdoors

Other walks to get involved in:

- Get involved with an orienteering event
- Give back to the area by doing a conservation walk
- Learn about the area with a cultural or heritage walk



Safety tips for walking in nature

Consider these safety tips from Parks Victoria:

- Learn more about the park you intend to visit:
 - Length and difficulty of tracks
 - Types of activities available
 - Facilities available
 - Opening times
- Check the weather and stay sun smart by wearing suitable clothing and taking sunscreen
- For longer walks take a map, plenty of water and a mobile phone



For more information

Connect with your local or state parks agency:

- <https://www.parks.tas.gov.au/>
- <https://parkweb.vic.gov.au/>
- <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/>
- <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/ACT-parks-conservation>
- <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/>
- <https://www.parks.sa.gov.au/Home>
- <https://nt.gov.au/leisure/parks-reserves>
- <https://parks.dpaw.wa.gov.au/>

Get Involved



- Host a Parks Week event in March
- Heart Foundation Walking can assist with:
 - Connecting with other walking groups
 - Promoting the event on our website
 - Event guides
 - Promotional resources
 - Media releases



Questions

References

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9. Mindful, 2016, "Take a Mindful Hike" website, accessed 18/01/19 at <https://www.mindful.org/take-a-mindful-hike/>
10. The Chopra Center, n.d., "Mindful Walking Practice: How to get started", accessed 18/01/19 at <https://chopra.com/articles/mindful-walking-practice-how-to-get-started>
11. Beliefnet, n.d., "Take a Mindful Hike", accessed 18/01/19 at <https://www.beliefnet.com/wellness/2004/09/take-a-mindful-hike.aspx>