



**Walk to Run**  
Village Corners Shopping Center  
4526 W. Village Dr.  
Tampa, FL 33624  
p: (813)-453-7885  
[www.firststepprograms.com](http://www.firststepprograms.com)

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## **Walking is Medicine** by Lynn Gray

As our society becomes more focused on technological advances and a busier lifestyle we find ourselves increasingly isolated, stressed, and physiologically more sedentary. The notion of “taking a break” is soothing and a practiced way of mentally relaxing. However, consider “taking a walk” as a far healthier and physically rewarding choice when desiring to briefly detour the stresses of life. It is a fact that the more control we have over our mental and physical well being increased overall health will occur, making day to day living more productive and meaningful. Especially true of today, those of us approaching middle age will find many exciting options in the exercise realm and want to be part of the action which a healthy body can deliver. “Taking a walk” will give the muscular and mental medicine needed to be continually mobile and physically independent throughout our lives. As we add a bit of intensity to our walk as done with cardio walking, the overall benefits increase as well.

There are many gains which cardio walking can give to people of all ages. Consider these following mental and physical perks.

- **Friendship:** Perhaps the greatest walking movement benefit of late is the camaraderie gained from joining walking groups planning a distance goal such as completing a 5K or a Half Marathon. The largest population gains of distance events are now made up of women. They love conquering new goals and becoming fit while allowing downtime for socializing and relaxing.
  - **Mood enhancer:** Regular walking reduces the propensity of depression. The ages of sixties, seventies, and beyond reveal an increased sense of isolation and lack of physical and mental stimulation. Retirement, increased isolation from not being in a social environment, and decreased physical health drive the later ages into negative habits often leading to alcoholism and increased drug use. A group walking program resolves this by providing its own social network. The younger ages gain increased self-esteem with an outlet to establish them competitively in a physical arena which supports walking and running events. Physiologically exercise increases endorphins, neurochemicals occurring naturally in the brain which elevate the mood, and reduces anxiety levels.
  - **Increased Coordination:** Accidental falls occur more frequently as one allows muscles, balance, and posture to deteriorate. In fact falling accounts for a large amount of deaths after 65. The walking movement establishes a continual heel to toe striking gait which aids balance and overall body coordination. The range of motion or leg span of a vigorous cardio walk together with the fast movement of the arms reminds the walker to practice a balanced posture during fast forward movement.
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- **Bone Density:** After thirty or so many of us are being reminded to engage in exercises to increase bone density to avoid breaking bones easily. By age 65 one in four women has osteoporosis; getting thin bones which look like a honeycomb. From forty on an increasingly amount of women get osteopenia, a predecessor to osteoporosis. Many studies have been made which show that the impact of walking, cardio walking and running can slow down and even reverse bone loss by promoting bone to become denser. Lastly, the more muscles we gain surrounding the bones the more protection our bones and vital organs receive from impact incidents.
  - **Get flexible:** Living out the middle ages and onward reveal a loss of fluidity both in the joints and largely in the muscles. The long span required for a full cardio-walk movement requires a stride length of 12 to 16 inches in length which lends itself to leg flexibility. Using the knee as a hinge joint helps greatly in keeping the forward movement both fluid and steady on strong knees with well developed tendons and ligaments. The use of arm propulsion of cardio walking is analogous with the knee/leg movement. In this case the range of motion is established with a full arm swing and assisted with a flexible elbow joint.
  - **Up the Metabolism:** The war of the worlds for many of us begins with weight loss vs. weight gain. Let's look at weight gain first. Cardio walking greatly increases the metabolism; the body's ability to burn energy. Conversely, as we age and our appetite decreases, a vigorous walk will stimulate the appetite thereby assuring the important nutrients and minerals to be absorbed into the body. The frosting on the cake for those who desire to lose weight is the development of leg, arm, and core muscle. The increased density of muscle mass increases metabolism even while you are sedentary. Yes!
  - **Digestive System Relief:** Increase of motion due to walking results in a decrease in diabetes due to the body removing sugar from the bloodstream quickly. The intestines are stimulated with vigorous cardio walking. The form needed for cardio walking includes a constant slight swing left and right with the arms which gives the intestines a slight "twisting" effect. This continuing twist will help the stimulate bowel movements and in general help rid the body of waste products.
  - **Breathe Right!** For sedentary individuals, by age 35 maximal oxygen intake has decreased by 10%, by 45 it has decreased by 20% or more. Walking increases the efficiency with which the muscle cells take oxygen from the blood, as well as preventing the shrinkage or deterioration of lung tissues. Walking forces increased oxygen into your lungs so they are able to handle the increase of air flow more efficiently due to the improved condition of lung tissue and increased development of chest muscles. The lungs become strong, efficient, and work like recharged receivers of air which in turn renew cells which giving the body more energy, making normal exertive tasks not leaving you breathless.
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- **Heart Rate, Where did it go?** As we age blood pressure tends to go up largely due to the arteries becoming less flexible and narrow. Worse yet, those same weakened and narrowing arteries become clogged with cholesterol which can result in heart disease. Cardio walking reduces both a high heart rate and blood pressure due to forcing the narrowing arteries to open up. The increased span of the arteries will lessen the work of the heart by lowering its stroke volume or pumping. A decrease in resting heart rate and blood pressure becomes two valuable health markers of the heart working more efficiently. Increased blood flow or circulation due to walking vigorously also helps lessen varicose veins and other related circulatory problems. Affectively, physical fatigue lessens as vigorous walking increases, again due to the increase of oxygen and blood circulation.

Cardio Walking gains in a nutshell:

1. Increases alertness and gives you a sense of well-being
  2. Provides a “rest” break from continual stress
  3. Relaxes both physically and mentally
  4. The increase of endorphins will reduce anxiety levels and depression.
  5. Increased oxygen will give clarity of mind which will help you stay focused at work.
  6. Steady aerobic movement will decrease weight and burn fat throughout the day.
  7. The physical changes happening to the body will improve your self-image.
  8. Continual exertion each day will help you sleep better.
  9. Big risk factors like heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure will be reduced.
  10. Better breathing will occur because of the increase of the heart’s pumping capacity and increased efficiency with which oxygen is delivered to the rest of the body.
  11. The increase in muscle mass will increase the basal metabolic rate because muscles burn more calories than fat.
  12. Sociability will increase and boredom will decrease since many times you will be exercising with others.
  13. The musculoskeletal system benefits due to increased flexibility of the joints, muscles, and ligaments.
  14. Osteoporosis is lessened due to increased bone growth resulting from weight bearing exercising such as cardio walking.
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### **A Schedule to Increase the Pace of Walking:**

**(Terms: cardio walk = 12-16" stride length with arm and legs moving forward vigorously, walk=easy effort-less stride length with arms by side)**

<b>Level</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Distance</b>	<b>3 miles</b>	<b>4 miles</b>	<b>4 miles</b>	<b>5 miles</b>	<b>5 miles</b>
<b>Ratio (Cardio Walk to Easy walk)</b>	<b>2 to 1</b>	<b>3 to 1</b>	<b>4 to 1</b>	<b>4 to 1</b>	<b>5 to1</b>
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>4 days</b>	<b>4 days</b>	<b>4 days</b>	<b>4 days</b>	<b>5 days</b>
<b>Weekly Mileage</b>	<b>12 miles</b>	<b>16 miles</b>	<b>16 miles</b>	<b>20 miles</b>	<b>25 miles</b>
<b>Speed (Per mile to aim for)</b>	<b>18 min.</b>	<b>16-17 min</b>	<b>15-16 min</b>	<b>14-16 min</b>	<b>12-15 min</b>

### **Contact Information**

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