



Walk to Run
Village Corners Shopping Center
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Form & Technique of Cardio Walking by Lynn Gray

Form for the Cardio Walk

Like any other sport, the better form you engage in while performing, the more efficient and faster the body will move. Proper form in cardio walking will allow the body mechanics to accept it for long periods of time. Good technique and posture result in efficient long distance aerobic training.

Let's check you out to see how you currently walk. Have a family member or friend do a brief video of you while walking down the block. Do you notice that your shoulders may be slightly hunched over? That could manifest later into a sore back and tight calves. Do you hold your shoulders up and appear stiff? That would indicate a certain amount of stress you are under causing the shoulders to not relax. You need to put the shoulders down and arch the back a bit. Does it look like you walk like a robot, with a stiff torso, neck, shoulders, and legs? Eventually, that will tire you out physically and mentally and not allow you to have a relaxing walk. Finally, take a look at your arms. Are they hanging by your sides like weights and barely moving forward while walking? Or are you using your arms in unison with your walk, pushing them forward at a 90 degree angle for forward momentum.

Time to Practice Cardio Walking:

Each practice technique should be ½ mile at least.

Practice # 1 – Posture: Tuck the chin in, holding your head in a neutral position without looking down or up, but rather forward to a point at least 15 to 20 feet in front of you. Visualize having a string running along your spine and out of the top of your head in a straight line.

Practice #2 – Breathing: Breathing should be deep, since it will bring oxygen to the cells bringing more energy into your body. Practice relaxed breathing being careful to not hyperventilate. Become aware of what your breathing rhythms are at different speeds: slow pace, medium pace, and fast pace.

Practice #3 – Foot Movement: Your gait should come to you naturally...do not over stride or under stride. Avoid making your stride too narrow since hip problems can result. You should be aware that the forward motion of each foot lines up to the hip to shoulder, and the foot placement is straight ahead, not pigeon footed, or facing inward.



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Practice #4 – Arms: The arms should be held at a 90 degree angle. Pump your arms straight forward and back, being certain to brush the sides of your hips to check. Put a safety pin just above your hip, making sure your arm brushes over it each time it moves forward. Practice this arm pump in front of a mirror with 1-3 pound hand held weights. Remember to keep a slight arch in your back so walking does not hurt your back nor put too much weight on the shins and knees.

Practice #5 – Shoulders: Your shoulders should be held square, being careful not to hunch them inward...again keep the pelvis in.

Practice # 6 – Foot Strike: Proper stepping should include a hip to shoulder-wide stance. Your heel strikes first and you move from heel to toe to get the “toe off” momentum. Wearing a cushioned, stability running shoe of medium weight will help accommodate this swift heel to toe movement. Keep your knees relaxed with a slight bend.

Practice #7 – Hip Movement: Synchronize arm and hip movement. Allow your hips to rotate downward and forward as your leg reaches forward. This gives your muscles and joints in your arms and legs a total workout. Keep your knees relaxed with a slight bend.

Practice # 8 – Before and After the Cardio Walk workout:

- A. Warm up slowly ½ mile by gradually getting “in cardio walking position”
- B. Stop and stretch: your Achilles, hamstrings, calves, quadriceps
- C. Give yourself a range of time or miles to do the workout. Remember to hydrate each twenty minutes or so. Wear a water belt if water is not readily available
- D. Warm-down ½ mile, relax your entire form with easy walking
- E. When finished, pour ice water on the legs. This will prevent any muscular inflammation and will help prevent common starting injuries such as shin splints

The Real Walk – Cardio Walking

What is the difference from just “taking a walk” to a cardio walk? The increase of leg and arm cadence. Active arms which are pumping back and forth in a sling shot motion will increase forward propulsion and increase shoulder and waist movement. Moving your arms quickly will lead to an increased metabolism, a faster gait, and develop stronger back to shoulder muscle movements. Let’s get to the legs. Quicker movement of the feet or cadence increase forward movement and will raise your heart rate, aerobic output, and together with fast arms, a higher metabolic rate occurs. High metabolism manifests into significant calorie burn. Quick movement of legs and arms gives efficiency in movement and increases coordination of foot strike, posture, and balance while walking.



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Resistance Training – Develop a Stronger Cardio Walk

Adding resistance workouts to the cardio walk can add to the physiological benefits mentioned above. Varying a slow speed of walking with a quicker cadence (foot strike) prevents overuse muscle injuries. The increased gait results in different muscles being recruited and increases the metabolic rate; more calories are burning. Another resistance technique to the cardio walk is carrying a heavy hand of one lb or less while doing the workout. Increased muscular development throughout the entire body will result. Lastly, going uphill forces the legs to lift higher resulting in a higher output of physical energy. Hill walking develops leg power and strength plus the increased arm pumping helps with building upper body strength.

What about training in the heat? Our next article will give the strategies needed to continue your cardio walking workouts when the temperature goes up.

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