



# Walk this Way

# Tips for beating the Summertime Blues

The start of summer brings fun-filled days at the pool, and enjoying family picnics, baseball, and other outdoor activities. It's also a great time to kick up your walking program. Whether you enjoy fun in the sun or prefer to stay indoors, the American Heart Association's Start! Walking Program gives you tips to get started and stay motivated.

### What to Wear

The hotter it is outside, the less we tend to wear, but we can't forget to cover ourselves up in other ways. Always protect yourself from the sun:

- Consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Always apply a water-resistant sunscreen with at least SPF 15.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours. You probably sweat the most in your shoes, so choose well-ventilated shoes and look for socks that wick away perspiration.
- Wear lightweight, light colored clothing.
- Choose light, breathable fabrics, such as cotton or a newer fabric, that wick away sweat.
- Wear a hat and/or sunglasses.

### When to Walk

Pick a time of day that you can commit

to every day. Many people believe that mornings are best for sticking to an exercise routine because there are fewer competing obligations. Cooler temperatures are another bonus. But if you're not a morning person, choose another time of day to walk.

In early afternoon, about noon to 3 p.m., it's best to stay indoors to walk. The sun is usually at its strongest, putting you at higher risk for heat stroke. Does your workplace have an indoor walking program? If so, walk indoors. Others prefer to walk in the evening before or after dinner. Just be sure to give yourself time to relax after your walk, or you may have trouble sleeping.

If it's just too hot to walk outside, don't put your fitness plans on hold. Try:

- Mall walking – many malls have walking trails just for mall walkers.
- Joining a gym – a YMCA or local recreation center are low-cost alternatives.
- Walking at work – set walking breaks and ask your peers to join you during the day, before work or at lunch.

### What to Eat and Drink

Healthy eating is an important part of

any exercise program. Fill your plate with vegetables and fruits, such as cucumbers, tomatoes, peaches, mangoes and berries.

Need a snack before you exercise? Not so fast. Eating too much before exercising can cause you to feel sluggish or have an upset stomach, cramping and even diarrhea. That's because your muscles and your digestive system are competing with each other for energy resources. On the flip side, not eating before you exercise can be just as bad. Low blood sugar levels can make you feel weak, faint or tired. Your mental abilities may be affected too, making you slower to react.

### A few tips:

- Always eat breakfast.
- Don't eat a heavy meal before you exercise.
- Stay hydrated. Drink a few cups of water before, during and after you walk
- For flavor, add your favorite fruits such as melons, pineapple, berries or even cucumber slices or mint to a pitcher of water and refrigerate for two hours.

### Heat Safety

It's important not to get overheated to avoid heat-related illnesses. The body

has ways to keep itself cool, like sweating, but if the body can't cool itself down, you get sick with heat-related illnesses. Take precautions and know the signs.

Heat-related illness usually happens in stages. The first stage can cause painful muscle cramps. If this occurs, stop the activity, find a cool place, get hydrated and stretch those muscles. Repeat if necessary. If there are no other signs, you can resume your activity.

Heat exhaustion is the next stage and may include headache, dizziness, nausea, or cool, moist, pale skin. Move to a cooler place, stop exercising and cool down immediately by dousing yourself with cold water and re-hydrating. You may need to seek medical attention.

Heat stroke includes vomiting, decreased alertness or loss of consciousness, rapid but weak pulse, rapid but shallow breathing and perhaps moist skin. Heat stroke is life threatening and requires emergency help. **Call 9-1-1** and get to a cooler place.

**For more tips and information on the Start! program, log on to [www.heart.org/stlouis](http://www.heart.org/stlouis).**