

Introduction

So you've decided you want to lose weight, right? And most likely, you've considered or tried various quick-fix weight-loss plans in the past only to lose weight and regain it shortly thereafter. If you're fed up with the weight-loss yo-yo game and are serious about losing weight and keeping it off, you need to focus on making healthy lifestyle changes you can stick with long term. And that's where this book comes in.

As a nutrition and fitness professional, I have worked with thousands of clients in the same situation as you. They may have had success with weight-loss plans but been unable to maintain the results. And one of the main reasons is that they were looking for a quick fix. Quick fixes just don't work. What does work is burning more calories than you take in. You see, weight loss doesn't have to be complicated — it's simple math. The key is to burn more calories so you don't have to drastically (or unrealistically) cut back on calories to a level that you can't maintain.

One of the easiest ways to burn more calories day in and day out is by walking. And the best part about it is that walking is one of the easiest, more versatile, and affordable forms of exercise you could ever ask for. That's why it's America's number-one form of exercise. It's easy to do anytime, anywhere, and it works! Walking on a regular basis — whether going for a brisk, structured walk or just fitting in more steps every day — can help you shed pounds and inches and, most importantly, keep them off. That's why I wanted to write this book — to show you just how simple weight loss (and maintaining a healthy weight) really can be. And it all starts with just one easy step!

About This Book

It probably comes as no surprise to you that exercise can help you lose weight. However, you may be unsure of just how much exercise or what type of exercise you need to lose weight. If you're new to exercise, you may also be unsure of how to get started. *Walking The Weight Off For Dummies* was designed specifically to answer these questions. Regardless of whether you're a seasoned exerciser looking to take your workout to the next level or have never exercised before, this book has something to offer you.

Unlike many weight-loss and fitness books on the market that provide strict, rigid guidelines that don't work for everyone, this book is completely customized to your needs. Using this book, you can begin to understand your exercise personality and goals and follow a personalized walking plan that not only will bring about quick results, but most importantly, will provide you with results you can maintain. When it comes to weight loss and exercise, the solution is not one-size-fits-all. This book addresses that fact, so no matter where you're starting from or how big or small your weight-loss goals are, you can achieve them once and for all.

This book is broken down into three main sections to help you lose weight: understanding how and why exercise promotes weight loss, determining the best exercise plan for your personal needs, and continuing to challenge yourself to maintain your results long term. You won't get to your goal weight with this book and wonder what's next. Instead, you'll find strategies and plans to help you not only get to your goal, but also to stay there for life. All of these sections work together to help you understand and achieve your weight-loss goals.

However, each part, and even each chapter within each part, is entirely independent of the other chapters while providing you with helpful information. If you feel you're already knowledgeable in one area, feel free to skip it and dive right into the sections where you want to find out more. The great thing about this book is that there's no *right* place to start. You can start anywhere. Although a lot can be learned from starting at [Chapter 1](#) and reading the book in order, you don't have to approach the book in this way. You can choose to read one chapter today, such as the one detailing individual walking plans, and then choose to read more about why walking is so effective at promoting weight loss another day.

As you read through this book, you'll notice that I flag some content as Technical Stuff and provide other information in the form of sidebars. This information can enhance your knowledge, but it's not critical for your weight-loss success. Skipping these areas is perfectly fine if you don't have the time to focus on them, and by doing so you won't miss any critical information.

Within this book, you may note that some web addresses break across two lines of text. If you're reading this book in print and want to visit one of these websites, simply key in the web address exactly as it's noted in the text, pretending as though the line break doesn't exist. If you're reading this as an e-book, you've got it easy — just click the web address to be taken directly to the website.

Foolish Assumptions

I wrote this book with the assumption that you are looking to lose weight and improve your overall health. Because you were motivated enough to pick up this book, I assume that you've committed to making some

lifestyle changes, even if only small ones, to start on the road to a healthier you. I also assume that, like everyone who wants to lose weight, you want to see results quickly. However, with that being said, I also assume you don't want to just see results quickly, but would like to maintain the results you achieve long term.

I never assume that you are foolish! In fact, I assume quite the opposite. You probably are already knowledgeable to some degree about weight loss and exercise, but would like guidance in these areas. I assume that you are most likely new to exercising as a form of weight loss or are already exercising some but looking for a way to enhance your results. I also assume that you have already made, or are considering making, improvements to your diet to help foster additional weight loss. However, if you're not sure how to eat to enhance your weight loss or have tried to make dietary changes unsuccessfully in the past, I encourage you to pick up my book *Belly Fat Diet For Dummies* along with the *Flat Belly Cookbook For Dummies* for individualized weight-loss plans that not only help to maximize your results when combined with the walking workouts in this book, but also further increase your knowledge of the role diet plays in weight loss and maintenance.

Icons Used in This Book

In the margins of *Walking Off the Weight For Dummies* (as in all *For Dummies* books), you find icons to help you maneuver through the text. Here's what the icons mean.



Whether you're getting started with exercise, sticking with your walking plan, or working on maximizing your results, you'll find that I periodically point out tips and tricks to make achieving your results — and keeping them — as simple as possible.



Be careful! This icon calls your attention to health conditions that may make certain forms of exercise unsafe as well as points out ways to reduce your risk of injury while walking.



Here, I point out many of the “whys” concerning weight loss and health improvements, such as why walking is so effective. Although I find this information valuable, if you want, you can skip over this stuff and still not miss a beat.



When it comes to weight loss and improving health, at times you may find yourself feeling discouraged or sidetracked. You may also sometimes forget why you are working so hard to achieve your goals. The information highlighted here helps you remember what you are working so hard for and how to stay motivated throughout the process.

Beyond the Book

This book provides a solid foundation for getting started with walking for weight loss. To maximize your results and stay motivated to continue with your walking plan,

you may also want to check out additional resources available to you online:

- ✓ You can download the book's Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/walkingtheweightoff. It's a handy resource to keep on your computer, tablet, or smartphone.
- ✓ You can read interesting companion articles that supplement the book's content at www.dummies.com/extras/walkingtheweightoff. I even include an extra top-ten list.

I also encourage you to check out my personal website, www.erinpalinski-author.com, for additional information, up-to-date research, product recommendations to enhance your walk, and weight-loss tips and recipes.

Where to Go from Here

As with all *For Dummies* books, you can start at the first page of [Chapter 1](#) or dive in anywhere the subject header grabs your attention. From there, you can move forward or backward as you like, skipping around or proceeding in sequence, to get everything you need from what's in store here.

If you don't plan to read in sequence from cover to cover, the obvious way to get your feet wet is to select the part that covers the subject you feel you need to explore most urgently and dive right in. Then dig into other sections that discuss subjects you feel you know pretty well, and you'll very likely discover some new facts or helpful tidbits. If you're really not sure what you hope to get from this book but know you want to begin working toward your weight-loss goals, start the old-fashioned way: [Chapter 1](#) gives bite-sized overviews of just about

everything else in the book, providing you with jumping-off points that help direct you where to go next.

Part I
**Getting Started with
Walking**



Visit www.dummies.com for more great Dummies content online.

In this part . . .

- ✓ Find out just why walking is America's number one form of exercise.
- ✓ Discover the amazing health benefits of walking.
- ✓ Get the scoop on how walking can help you to shed pounds, lose inches, and most importantly, keep the weight off for good.
- ✓ Learn the various ways to incorporate walking into your daily routine.

Chapter 1

The Perfect Exercise: Walking

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeing how exercise affects your health
 - ▶ Discovering what makes walking terrific exercise
 - ▶ Determining whether walking is right for you
 - ▶ Setting attainable goals
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Over 100 million people can't be wrong! Walking continues to be the number one form of exercise in America with over 100 million Americans walking regularly to improve fitness and manage their weight. Why is walking so popular? Is it the right exercise for you? As something that comes naturally to most of us, walking is a skill you already have. No need to take lessons, hire a trainer, or purchase expensive equipment. You already have everything you need to walk because you do it every day.

Walking is also a "no excuse" form of fitness. It can be done anywhere — around your home, at the grocery store, outside, at work, and so on. You can't say you couldn't exercise because you weren't able to get to the gym or forgot your exercise equipment. You can squeeze in a walk almost anytime no matter where you are. Talking on the phone? Stand and walk while you talk! Have to go grocery shopping? Take a few extra laps around the store before you get started. It's really that easy!

It sounds so simple to fit in a few minutes of walking here and there, but you may be wondering whether that can really make a difference. Does adding a few extra laps around the grocery store or walking while talking on the phone help you to shed pounds? The answer is “absolutely”!



Short walks, long walks, or just boosting daily movement by increasing your daily steps can do everything from help you shed pounds and unwanted inches to improve your overall health and even boost your mood and energy. Walking offers benefits to everyone at every age. That’s the wonderful thing about walking. Whether you are a seasoned exerciser in great shape or just getting started with exercise, you can still reap weight loss and health benefits from walking. Throughout this book I help you identify just how walking can benefit you, and I give you tips and tricks to maximize your walking workout for the fastest results. You won’t believe just how easy walking off the weight can really be!

Why Walking?

You see it everywhere — on the nightly news, in articles in your local paper, or even just walking down the street. The obesity epidemic is on the rise. People of every age, including young children and teens, are affected. And one of the main reasons for this upward trend in obesity is the increase in sedentary lifestyles. Many people wake up in the morning, sit in their car or in a bus on their way to work, spend long hours at a desk job, and then commute home. After a long, stressful day, they may relax on the couch, watch TV, and then fall asleep.

Although the day may be busy, very little, if any, physical activity takes place. However, eating habits most likely remain unchanged. This imbalance of taking in more calories than you are burning due to inactivity leads to weight gain. Furthermore, it can have a dramatic impact on health as well.



So much, in fact, that one study found a sedentary lifestyle is now a bigger killer than cigarette smoking in our society!

As you can see, you owe it to yourself and your health to be more active. But with busy work schedules, family commitments, and day-to-day activities, how can you possibly make time to schedule in something else like regular exercise? That's where walking comes in! Walking is the number one exercise in our country for good reasons — it's easy to do, and you can do it anywhere, anytime! Right around your first birthday, you figured out how to put one foot in front of the other and walk around. Over the years, you've become an expert at walking. That's one reason it's such a great form of exercise — you already have all the skills you need to walk. Your body knows how to walk and your muscles are conditioned to walk; all you need to do is get up and walk more! Throughout this book, I show just why walking is the best exercise you can do, how you can do it anywhere at any time, and how it can have a major impact on your overall health as well as your body weight and waistline.

If you can walk anywhere, anytime, is any type of walking really exercise? For instance, if you are leisurely window shopping, is this just as much exercise as taking

a brisk walk around the block? Or does hiking in the woods offer the best benefit to your health and body?



The answer is, when it comes to the definition of walking for exercise and fitness, all walking counts. This isn't to say that a casual stroll burns as many calories as a brisk uphill walk, but walking in any form contributes to your overall daily activity level and therefore your fitness level and health as well.

Walking for daily living and fitness walking

When it comes to walking, there are many different forms. You can take a slow, leisurely walk; you can power walk; you can walk on an incline; you can even hike up a mountain. All of these are forms of walking that boost your overall daily calorie burn and health. That's one of the greatest benefits of walking. It can be adjusted to any fitness level and any location.

Fitness walking

Fitness walking is defined as “the aerobic sport of brisk, rhythmic, vigorous walking, intended to improve cardiovascular efficiency, strengthen the heart, control weight gain, and reduce stress” by the American Heritage *Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. This type of walking is usually done for a set duration or time or for a set distance. When participating in fitness walking, you're aiming to walk to improve your overall fitness level, speed, and health. Fitness walking is usually done at a brisk pace, one at which you find your heart rate elevated and carrying on a full conversation may be difficult. This type of walking helps to burn the most

calories per minute, and therefore can promote more rapid losses of weight and body fat.

Walking for daily living

Walking is defined as “to advance or travel on foot at a moderate speed or pace” or “to move about or travel on foot for exercise or pleasure” by the Random House Dictionary. This type of general walking is the stop and go walking we all do throughout the day. You may walk through the grocery store or walk around your house as you clean. At work you may walk from your desk to the break room, or to speak with a coworker. Although this type of walking isn’t always done at a brisk pace or with the intention of increasing fitness, it still plays a large role in weight management and overall health.

The amount of general walking you do throughout the day can be measured in individual steps versus distance or length of time. Using steps to measure your total activity throughout the day can make increasing exercise more manageable. Stating that you will walk an extra 1,000 steps during the day can sound more doable than saying you will add an extra half mile walk.



In fact, working in extra steps during the day instead of trying to schedule additional exercise makes walking less of a chore and more just another part of your day. Adding those extra steps is something you’re more likely to stick with, allowing it to have a greater impact on your health and your body weight.

Throughout this book, I show you just how much increasing your daily steps can add up when it comes to weight loss as well as improving health. In [Chapter 2](#), I provide you with an in-depth look at how increasing your

steps can torch excess calories and the best ways to track and increase these steps over time. You see why research has found that daily active living, such as taking the stairs over the elevator or parking farther away at the store, may have even greater health benefits than short, intensive workouts that are counterbalanced by a day generally filled with sitting.

The importance of walking for good health

Walking is not America's number one form of exercise for no reason. In fact, walking offers tremendous benefits to your health, your waistline, and even your mood and stress levels. To be honest, you can't afford not to walk! Now, if you've picked up this book, I'm sure the main benefit you're concerned about with walking is shedding pounds and inches. Well, don't worry — walking will certainly help you with this.

As you may already be aware from past failed weight-loss attempts, it's almost impossible to lose weight and keep it off long term with diet alone. Exercise needs to be a vital part of your daily routine. The formula for weight loss is simple. Take in fewer calories than you burn and you'll lose weight. However, the more active you are, the more calories you burn, which allows more flexibility with your eating plan. You can cut calories without exercise and lose weight, but keeping this weight off without exercise can be quite challenging. Exercising on a regular basis helps to build and maintain muscle mass. Because muscle boosts metabolism (the amount of calories you burn each day), increasing it makes weight management easier.



To show you just how important physical activity is to weight loss, take a study done at Wake Forest University Medical Center. This study compared two groups of women: one group who dieted and one who walked while dieting. The women who walked between 1 and 2 miles daily three times per week were able to shrink stubborn belly fat cells by 18 percent over a four month period, while those who just dieted showed no change in belly fat cells. As you can see by these results, just short walks a few times per week can make a large difference in body fat as well as body weight.

In addition to weight loss, walking offers many other health benefits as well including:

- ✓ Improving heart health
- ✓ Lowering stress levels
- ✓ Decreasing diabetes risk
- ✓ Improving bone health
- ✓ Boosting mood
- ✓ Improving cognitive function
- ✓ Boosting the immune system
- ✓ Decreasing symptoms associated with menopause
- ✓ Improving sleep
- ✓ Increasing lifespan

The Benefits of Walking as Exercise

If there were something you could do every day, something you already knew how to do, that was easy, didn't cost you a thing, could be done anywhere, and could help you shed pounds and improve health, would you do it? Who wouldn't? That's why walking is so popular! In just a few minutes per day, without buying any exercise equipment or having to travel to a gym, or learn a skill that requires the coordination of a circus acrobat, you can burn calories, shed inches, boost metabolism, and fight disease — just by putting one foot in front of the other! So why not get started today?

When you look at starting an exercise routine, the number one question you should ask yourself is “Is this something I can stick with?” With walking, the answer is usually an easy “yes.”



Walking is a low-impact exercise, so even if you suffer from joint pain or have a history of injury, it's typically an exercise you can enjoy without risk of further injury or increased pain. Walking can also be as intense or as easy as you want. For instance, if one day you just don't feel like partaking in vigorous exercise, you can still boost your fitness level with a leisurely stroll around the park or the shopping mall. If you feel like an intense workout another day, you can power walk on an incline to really challenge your endurance.

As you can see, walking really offers something for everyone. It's an exercise you can do at any age or any fitness level. You can walk alone, in a group, or with a friend. Walking can take place outside in your neighborhood or a local park, indoors in a shopping center or around your home, at the gym on a treadmill,

or even when traveling and sightseeing. Other than proper footwear, little equipment is required. With walking, there really are no excuses. Nothing is holding you back from fitting walking into your day. So are you ready to start moving?

You can walk anytime, almost anywhere

Although taking the stairs instead of the elevator or walking the long way to the restroom at the office may not seem like exercise, it can all start to add up. That's one of the main reasons that walking is such a great form of exercise — it can really become part of your daily routine. In fact, once you get in the habit of increasing your daily physical activity by upping your daily steps, you'll be amazed at the results you can see from what feels like very little effort.



Unlike some forms of exercise where you have to schedule time, purchase equipment, or drive to the gym, walking can be done anywhere at any time. With walking, you move in a natural way that's fun and relaxing, without having to worry about learning special techniques or operating special equipment. And even if you've never exercised before, you know how to walk. In fact, I can almost guarantee you do it every day. So the only thing that is holding you back from increasing the amount you walk each day so you can start to drop pounds and inches is you.

Walking is such a popular form of exercise because it doesn't feel like "exercise" at all. In fact many experts now are starting to promote the idea of just getting more active to become fit than recommending we all "work out." One of the biggest reasons for this is compliance

and consistency. If you think of the word “exercise” as something you dread doing or as a chore, motivating yourself to get started can be hard. Or, once you have started, it can be hard to stick with it if you aren’t enjoying yourself. On the other hand, if you can simply take more steps today than you did the day before, that’s easy! It doesn’t feel like a chore. In fact, it seems almost too simple not to do. And that’s what makes it so easy to stick with. Regardless of what you do to be more active, just being more physically active and staying that way will help you to lose weight, decrease belly fat, and improve your health and overall well-being.

Almost anyone can do it

Even the most novice exerciser can take comfort in the fact that almost anyone can start a walking routine. The simplicity of walking is what makes it such a natural choice for exercise. It’s a great way to gain confidence because it’s beneficial to your health without being too challenging. And this is especially important if you are new to exercise or feel as though you’re out of shape and want to ease back into exercise gradually.



With walking, you can make your workout whatever you want. If you want to focus on easing into exercise gradually, you can focus on building the amount of steps you take each day to increase your daily activity level. If you want to really challenge yourself, you can power walk to increase your speed, strength, and endurance. You can even change your terrain, such as by walking uphill or hiking through the woods, to add an extra level to your workout. One of the greatest things about walking is that it can be as easy or as challenging as you want it to be. And regardless of how you walk, the more you do it, the more benefits you'll gain.

Don't be fooled into thinking that if you don't go to the gym or get out and run for hours on end that you won't be able to shed pounds or get rid of stubborn belly fat. In fact, an hour at the gym may not even trump a day filled with many steps when it comes to weight loss. A study from the University of South Carolina found that women who spent about three quarters of their day being physically active (such as cleaning, running errands, and gardening) burned 10 percent more calories throughout the day than women who spent one hour at the gym but were sedentary the majority of the day otherwise. The research doesn't lie — walking really adds up! So no matter your age, your fitness level, or whether you are a gym rat or have never exercised a day in your life, just get up and put one foot in front of the other and start walking. It really is as easy as that!

Deciding Whether Walking Is the Right Exercise for

You

If you have opened this book, you are most likely considering walking as your primary source of exercise. If you're still contemplating whether walking is the right exercise for you, ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ When you think about any form of exercise you can do, what do you consider the most enjoyable?
- ✓ What would be the easiest for you to fit into your daily routine?
- ✓ What exercise would be the least taxing on your body and your joints?
- ✓ What is an exercise you can do anywhere no matter whether you are at work, at home, or traveling?

If you think about all the many forms of exercise you can partake in, walking is one of the only ones that answers most, if not all, of these questions. Walking is easy. You already know how to do it. It can be done anywhere, anytime with no equipment needed. It's cheap, it's enjoyable, and you can do it alone or with others. Maybe instead of asking yourself whether walking is the right exercise for you, you may want to ask who walking is *not* a great choice of exercise for.

If you've been hesitant to get started with walking, ask yourself what may be holding you back. Is it the idea of trying to schedule yet another thing into your busy day? If so, walking doesn't need to be hard and you don't even need to "make time" for it per se. Walking can be as simple as tracking and increasing your steps by using a tool such as a pedometer. Check out [Chapter 2](#) for more details on how to use a pedometer and how to work on

increasing your daily steps to burn more calories without even realizing it!

If you've been resistant to start a walking routine for fear of getting off track due to having failed at past attempts to exercise, don't worry. Even if you were not successful with starting or sticking with an exercise routine in the past, it doesn't mean you can't be now.



One of the easiest ways to be successful with exercise is to make it a part of your daily routine and to make it as easy as possible. You can't get much easier than doing something you already do anyway. As with any exercise plan, you want to ease your way into a walking routine. You don't need to start walking for hours on end day after day (and that isn't even needed to see results). Instead, throughout this book I show you the best ways to get started and stick with your routine. You won't believe how easy it is to get moving and start seeing results!

Assessing your exercise needs

When starting an exercise routine, you first want to assess your needs. What are you hoping to get out of your exercise plan? And more importantly, what does your exercise plan need to offer in order for you to stick with it? Walking can really be tailored to meet most of your exercise wants and needs. Once you identify what you want to get out of your walking routine, I can then help you identify the walking program that's best suited for you and your goals.

As you begin to think about what your walking routine needs to offer, ask yourself the following questions:

✓ Do I need an exercise I can do anywhere?

- ✓ Am I willing to use exercise equipment, or do I want to keep my workout as minimal as possible?
- ✓ Do I need to be only outdoors or only indoors when I exercise, or can my routine be flexible?
- ✓ Do I want my routine to help me tone and build muscle?
- ✓ Do I want my routine to improve my flexibility?
- ✓ Is my main desire for my routine to burn as many calories as possible in the shortest amount of time?
- ✓ Do I want an intense workout or a more relaxing workout?
- ✓ Is it important that my exercise routine incorporate a workout partner or buddy?
- ✓ Does my workout need to be as effective as possible in a very small time frame?
- ✓ Do I want to space my exercise out throughout the day or do it all at once?
- ✓ What is the most important factor in my workout routine to ensure I will be consistent with it?

Answering these questions can help you determine why you want to walk and what results are the most important for you to see from walking. Your answers to these questions will also help you to identify what type of walking routine will be the most enjoyable for you and the most likely for you to stick with. As with anything, consistency is key to achieving and maintaining results. For this reason, making sure you know just what type of walking routine you are most likely to be consistent with is key to your long-term success.

Assessing your fitness level

Now that you know what you want your walking routine to offer you and the type of walking routine you will be most successful with, it's time to analyze your current fitness level. If you have never exercised in the past, you may be feeling slightly hesitant about starting. However, the beauty of walking is that it's a form of exercise you already do each and every day. No need to learn any fancy exercise techniques or be in a room full of fitness buffs where you feel intimidated. You can start at your own pace anywhere you want.

If you've never exercised before and have a mostly sedentary lifestyle, consider yourself a beginner when it comes to starting a walking routine. You can advance as quickly as you like; however, setting your expectations too high too soon can lead to burnout, causing you to fail to stick with your exercise routine.

If you're someone who doesn't regularly exercise but you have a very active life, such as working a physically active job, you may be able to start with a more challenging walking routine as your level of strength and endurance is higher than someone who is mainly sedentary.

If you already exercise by walking or another form of exercise, you can also jump into a more challenging walking routine. But regardless of your current fitness level, remember that when it comes to starting a new workout, don't try too much too soon.



Overexercising, especially in the beginning, can lead to injury, soreness, and a decreased likelihood of sticking to your workout routine. Start small and build up gradually, which is the best way to ensure you will be walking for years to come!

As you assess your current fitness level, it's important to consider any health conditions you may have, any past or current injuries, or any limitations such as joint pain that may impact your walking routine. As you read through this book, you find out what forms of walking for fitness are best for all fitness levels, health conditions, and even joint and bone conditions.



However, even if you have no prior health concerns, you should always contact your physician before starting or changing any exercise routine.

Goal Setting and Walking

In order to be successful with an exercise routine, you need to understand why you are doing it. What motivated you to pick up this book? Have you always wanted to walk for exercise, but not known how? Are you trying to shed pounds and inches and thought this may work for you? Are you looking to improve your health or increase your energy levels? Whatever your reasons for exercising are, you want to identify them and remember them.

As you get started with your walking plan and continue with it over time, you want to look back at these reasons for exercise and see the progress you have made. For instance, if your main reason to start a walking routine is to lose inches around your waistline, in a month when your waistline is 2 inches smaller, you can use that result to motivate you to keep moving. If your goal is to lower your blood pressure and a few months from now you're able to decrease your medication dosage, you want to realize what a huge impact walking has had on your health so you can be motivated to continue with it.

When it comes to walking, you may have only one reason to get started or you may have many. What's most important is that you identify and remember these reasons. On a day when you're feeling sluggish and tired or just don't feel like walking, thinking about these reasons, the progress you have made, and the progress you still want to make, can help you stick with your routine. If, at times, you feel like you're working to increase your steps everyday and wonder whether it really makes a difference, you can look back at the pounds you've lost or how much lower your cholesterol level is and know that your efforts really have been paying off.

Why goal setting is vital to walking success

You have made a commitment to yourself to start a walking routine. In order to not just start, but to also stick with this routine, you want to create a list of goals. When you compile your goal list, keep in mind that setting a goal isn't just about the end result. Small goals, even daily goals, are really what help you to achieve your long-term goals.

Take a look at an example: Mary wants to start walking to lose 40 pounds and decrease her blood pressure. Now, if every day, while Mary is lacing up her sneakers, all she thinks about is how much more weight she has to lose to reach her long-term goal of 40 pounds or how many more months it may be before she can get off her blood pressure medication, she may become discouraged. In fact, she may feel that her goals are so far off that they're not attainable and give up all together.

What can Mary do to get motivated and stay motivated with her walking routine so she can eventually reach her

long-term goals? The answer is to set more goals! It may seem redundant, but setting small goals can help you achieve larger goals over time. In the journey to achieve your long-term goals, these small goals also help you feel a sense of accomplishment, which helps you stay on track and motivated. Mary may want to start by setting a goal of just walking, regardless of the time, daily. Just getting up and walking, even if only for a few minutes each day, means that she is on her way to being consistent with a walking routine. After she has achieved this goal, she can set a goal to walk for a minimum of 10 minutes per day. Before she knows it, she'll be down 5 pounds, and can focus on a goal of losing the next five. These small goals continuously give her something to work toward and achieve to keep her motivated. By using goal setting in this way, she is working toward her long-term goals every day but isn't becoming discouraged by the time it may take her to achieve them.

Goal setting can work in the same way for you and help to make you successful with your walking plan as well as your long-term goals. To set goals for yourself, start by asking yourself, "What was my main motivation for picking up this book?" Whatever the reason, take out a piece of paper and write it down. Now write down what you want to get out of exercise. Write down every benefit you are hoping for: weight loss, increased energy, improved health, a smaller waistline, fewer medications, and so on. As you write down your goals, make sure they are as specific as possible. If you want to lose weight, how much weight do you want to lose? If you want to decrease your cholesterol level, what is your cholesterol goal? If you are hoping your waistline will decrease, how many inches do you want to shed? Now, keep this list on hand because you'll use it as I show you just how walking can help you to achieve all of these goals.

How walking can help you achieve your goals

After creating a list of all the goals you have for yourself, from weight loss to improved health and everything in between, it's time to focus on how walking can help you to achieve these goals. Walking can impact your body in a number of amazing ways. Walking can do all of the following and more:

- ✓ Increase the amount of calories you burn each day
- ✓ Tone muscles
- ✓ Boost metabolism
- ✓ Improve mood
- ✓ Decrease stress
- ✓ Lower blood pressure
- ✓ Decrease heart rate
- ✓ Lower blood sugar
- ✓ Improve overall cholesterol levels
- ✓ Decrease the risk of certain cancers
- ✓ Improve bone density
- ✓ Increase energy levels

The goals you set for yourself help to determine how you should walk, how often you should walk, what type of walking you should do, and even where you may want to walk. For instance, if you want to start a walking routine to stay at a healthy body weight and increase energy, your walking routine will look a bit different than that of the person who wants to build muscle and lose 20 pounds.



The more tailored your walking routine is to you and your goals, the quicker you'll see results and the more likely you are to maintain your results in the long run as well. And that's what I'm here to help you with. Throughout this book, I help you figure out the best walking plan for your fitness level and goals. Not only do I show you just how to get started and stick with this routine until you reach your goals, but I also show you how to maintain your results thereafter.

After you know what you want to get out of your walking routine and all the great things walking can do for you, it's time to break down your goals, look at each of them in depth, and determine just what style of walking will help you to achieve each goal.

Your goals for your walking routine most likely fall into one of three categories:

- ✓ Weight-loss goals
- ✓ Health goals
- ✓ Fitness goals

The type of goal you set impacts the walking routine you set for yourself. For instance, if you set a weight-loss goal of losing 10 pounds and a fitness goal of increasing your endurance, you want to make sure your walking routine not only focuses on burning more calories but is also challenging enough to improve your cardiovascular fitness to increase endurance. If someone else set a similar weight-loss goal but her only other goal was to decrease stress, her walking routine may focus more on increasing daily movement and long, leisurely walks.



Understanding what category the goals you set for yourself fall into is critical in determining how you design your walking routine. These goals also help you see how you should adjust your walking routine over time to help you reach all of your goals as quickly and easily as possible. It's also important to look at each goal you set for yourself and review it critically. Make sure the goals you set are realistic for you to achieve. Make sure those goals are healthy and safe. For instance, setting a goal to weigh well below your recommended ideal body weight is neither safe nor healthy. Setting a high-reaching goal such as walking 10 miles a day may be achievable, but is it really realistic to believe that you'll have time for this every day? Over time, walking this far day to day may also start to have a negative impact on your joints.



Be honest with yourself about what you can realistically achieve. Setting goals that are too lofty is doing a disservice to yourself by setting yourself up for failure. Start by setting realistic goals that challenge you, but are attainable. Remember, you can always add onto your goals at a later date.

Your weight-loss goals

If you have picked up this book, most likely your main motivation for walking is to shed pounds and inches. Just how much weight you want to lose is up to you. However, when setting weight-loss goals, it's important to be realistic with yourself. You never want to aim for too low of a body weight, as that can be just as dangerous as being overweight. You also want to realize that the