

ANNUAL GUIDE: Our Proven Home Remedies p.82

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walk this way

8 steps for a full-body workout





maximize

It's no secret that walking is great exercise. But our easy 8-step plan intensifies your walk to give you full-body benefits. **By Erin O'Donnell Photography by Keller and Keller**



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PICK A BRISK PACE

Start by walking for 5 minutes at an easy warm-up pace. Then, to burn more calories, take faster steps. Keep your steps small and quick, and aim to maintain this pace for 20 to 30 minutes.

Of course, your pace depends on your fitness level. If this is your first exercise in a while, start at a speed that allows you to converse comfortably with a partner. If you're more fit, increase your speed until you can't talk comfortably. "You can maybe get a couple words out," says Liz Neporent, a New York City-based certified trainer and author of *Fitness Walking for Dummies* (IDG Books, 2000). "But you shouldn't, for example, be able to sing."

your walk



PAY ATTENTION TO POSTURE

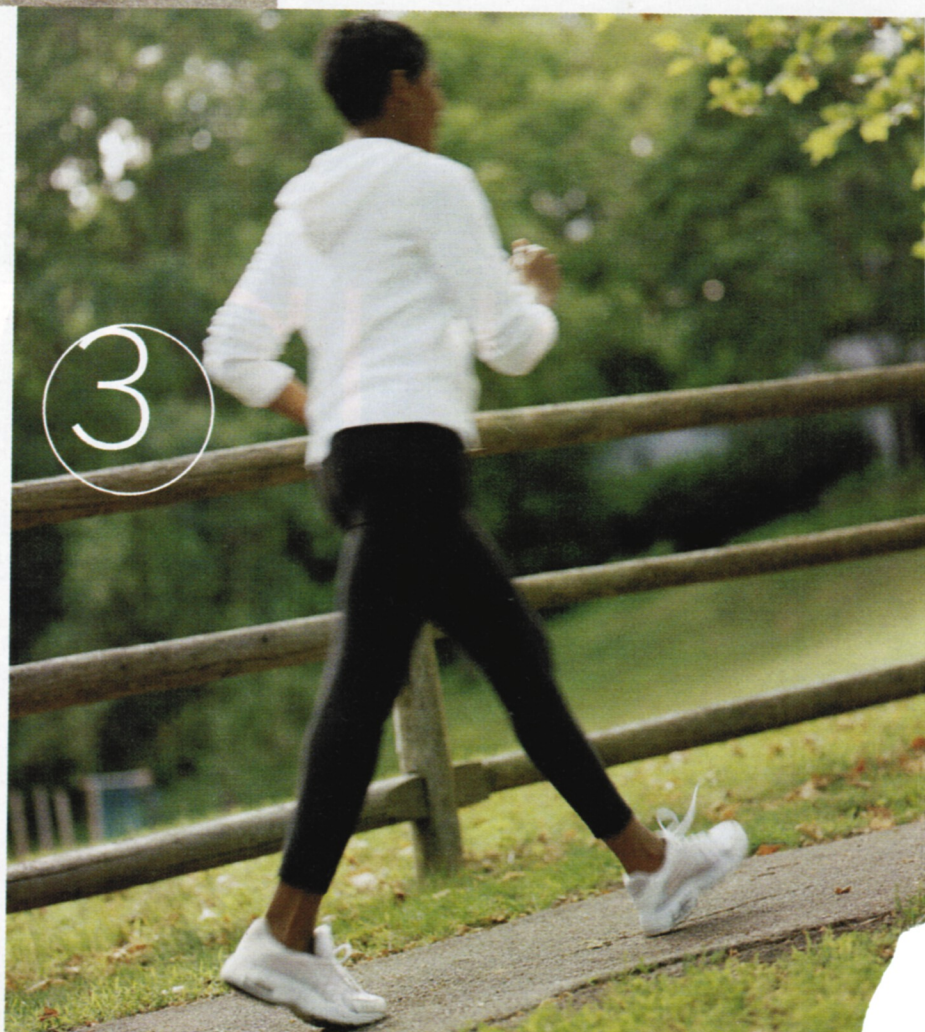
"Good posture ensures that your muscles are all working at their optimal level," says Neporent. It also helps you move faster. As you walk, keep these posture points in mind.

- **Walk tall.** Keep your head upright. Imagine it's a balloon and keep it centered over your shoulders.
- **Don't hunch.** Gently push your shoulders back and down; don't let them inch toward your ears.
- **Use your arms.** Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle, and swing your arms back and forth, keeping your elbows close to your body. Swinging your arms increases your momentum.
- **Change the way you step.** When you walk fast, it helps to move your feet like a tightrope walker: Hit the ground heel first and roll all the way through your foot, pushing off firmly with your toes. This reduces the impact on your joints.
- **Engage your torso.** Pull your navel in toward your spine to tighten your abdominal muscles. Don't stick out your buttocks; this can cause lower back pain.
- **Cup your hands loosely.** Imagine you're holding a butterfly that you don't want to lose (or crush).

HIT A HILL

Include an incline in your walk. It not only increases the benefit to your heart and lungs, but it also gives your gluteus maximus (your buttocks muscles) an extra workout. Try to keep your intensity level on par with the rest of your walk. To check, conduct the talk test. You should be able to say the same number of words that you could on flat ground. If not, slow your pace. As you head downhill, take small, controlled steps to avoid injuring your knees.

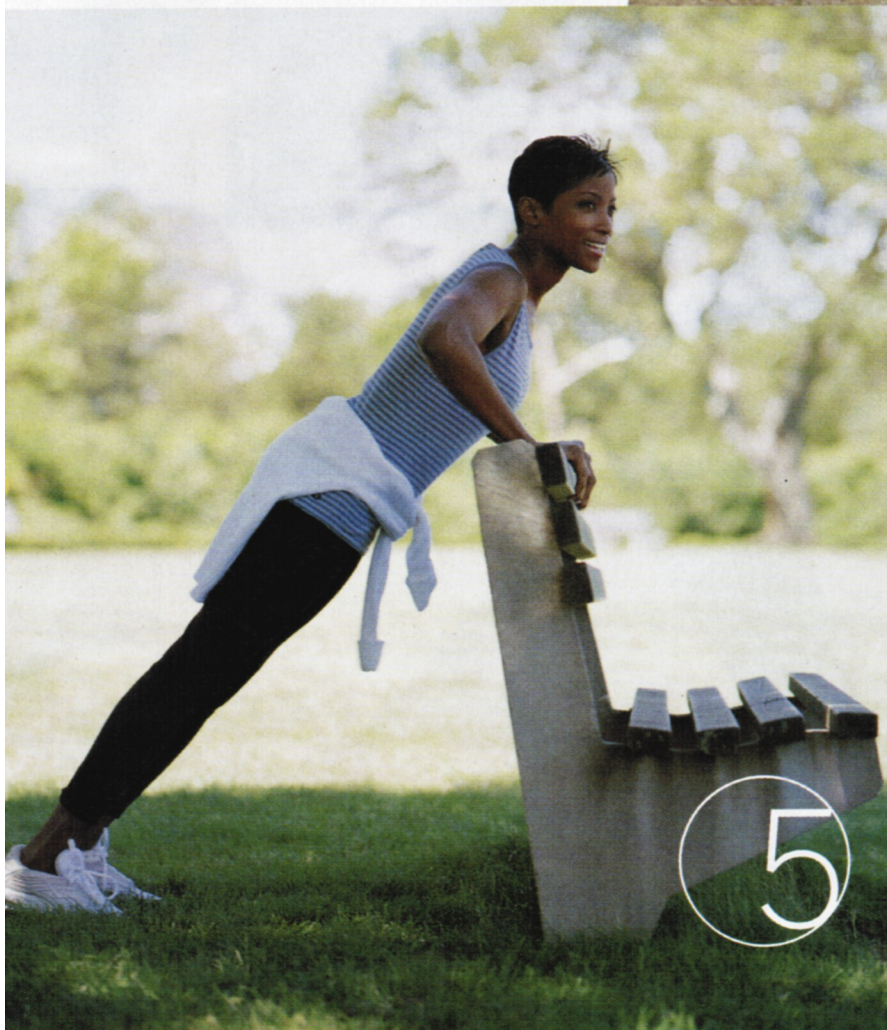
Of course, if you live in a town with flat terrain, you'll need to be creative. "Even people in Kansas have ramps up into parking lots," Neporent says. "Here in New York, I have the same problem, so I'm always headed to the Brooklyn Bridge." In a pinch, a set of stairs can provide the same benefits, but step carefully, Neporent warns. Stairs are even harder on your knees than hills.



LAUNCH INTO LUNGES

After you've maintained a moderate- to high-intensity pace for at least 20 minutes, walk at an easy cool-down pace for 5 minutes. Now you're ready to do walking lunges.

These lunges improve your balance and help tone your leg muscles. Start by standing tall, with your abs pulled in and your shoulders back. Place your hands at your waist. (Or, bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle and swing them back and forth as you step to help you balance.) Inhale and take a giant step forward with your left foot. As you plant your left foot, press your left heel into the ground and bend your left knee, keeping it directly above your left ankle. Lower your right knee close to the ground. Exhale as you press through your feet up into a standing position and bring your feet together. Step forward with your right foot and repeat the lunge. Repeat 7 more times on both sides. (As time passes and you grow stronger, increase the number of repetitions.)



PERFORM PARK BENCH PUSH-UPS

Actually, you don't need a park bench. Any surface at waist-height or lower—such as your back porch or the hood of a car—will do. This move strengthens your upper body and can improve your arm swing, helping you to walk faster, Neporent says.

Stand about 3 feet away from the waist-high surface and place your hands a little more than shoulder-width apart on it. Don't lock your knees. Inhale as you bend your elbows and lower your entire body a few inches toward the surface. Then exhale and raise your body to the starting position. Don't allow your back to sag. Repeat 7 more times. (As time passes and you grow stronger, increase the number of repetitions.)

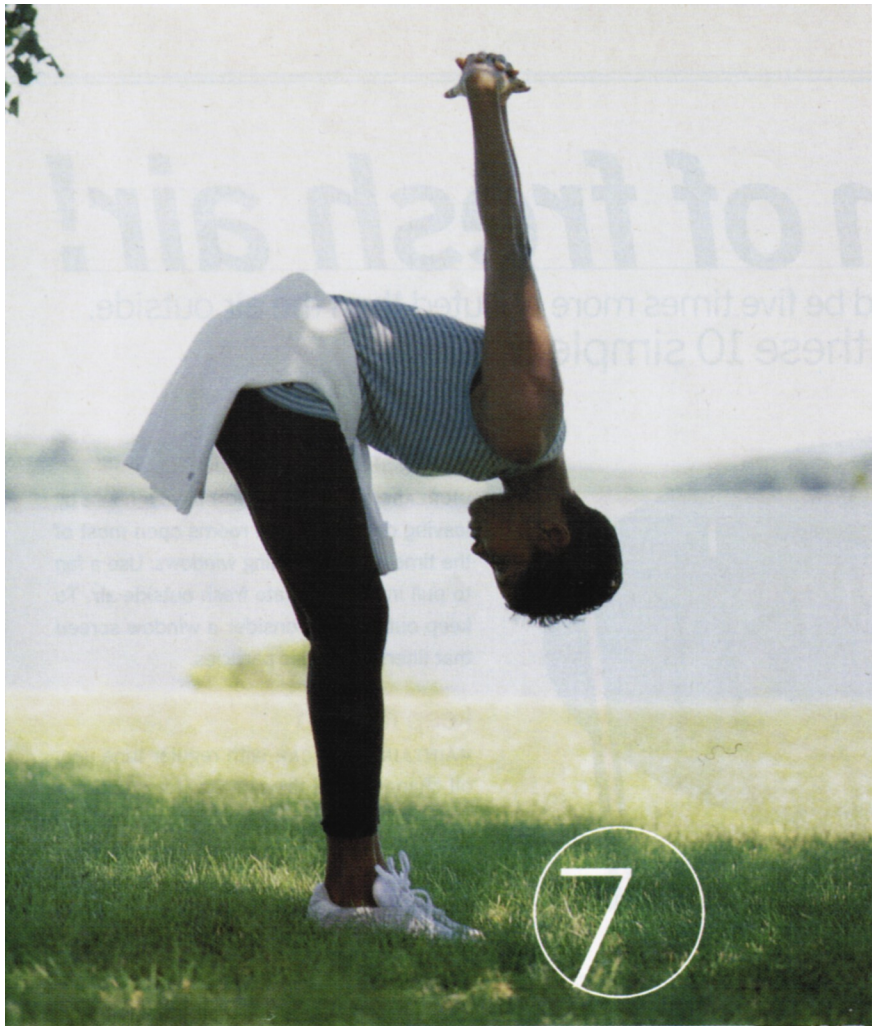
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TRY STOPLIGHT SQUATS

Squats are super for strengthening your glutes, quadriceps, and hamstrings, the muscles in your buttocks and legs. (Keep in mind that squats are also great midwalk if you have to pause at a traffic light.)

Stand with your feet hip-width apart, and shift your weight back on your heels. Pull your abdominals in and place your hands on the tops of your thighs. Inhale, bend your knees, and lower your torso as if you were going to sit down in a chair. Lower yourself as far as you can without leaning your torso more than a few inches forward. Keep your knees directly above your feet; don't let them shoot out past your toes. Exhale and push through your heels to an upright standing position. Repeat 7 more times.





STRETCH WITH STANDING MUDRA

Now you're ready to move into stretches. This yoga pose, called Standing Yoga Mudra, recommended by Ila Sarley, co-teacher of the Yoga and Walking weekend course at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, N.Y., is great for shoulder and arm muscles.

Stretching is beneficial for two reasons: It relieves the tension that accumulates in your body during your walk, and it helps your muscles get rid of lactic acid, a waste produced during exercise that can trigger pain.

Stand tall and spread your feet a little more than hip-width apart. Interlace your fingers behind your lower back. (If your hands don't touch, grasp a scarf or a stick.) Bend forward from your hips, keeping your back flat. As you bend, lift your hands up over your head and toward the ground in front of your feet.

When you've bent over as far as you can, relax your head and neck. Take 5 to 10 deep breaths. To release, bend your knees and slowly roll up your spine.

FINISH WITH DOWNWARD FACING DOG

This yoga posture is a full-body stretch and strengthener that's ideal for walkers, Sarley says. Scout out a soft, level surface. Start in the Table pose, on your hands and knees with your fingers spread on the ground. Curl your toes under, place the balls of your feet on the ground, and push your hips up into the air as you straighten your legs and elbows, creating an upside-down V. Relax your head, neck, and shoulders and breathe deeply. Press your heels toward the ground. (Your goal is to place your heels flat on the ground, but most people can't when they first practice this pose. As time passes and you grow more flexible, it will be easier.) Take 3 to 10 deep breaths. To leave the pose, lower your knees to the ground to return to the Table pose.

