

Walking on the Path to Better Health



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least three benefits of walking as a form of physical activity.
- Recall the physical activity recommendations.
- Apply the principles of exercise safety to physical activity.
- Use walking as a form of physical activity at work and at home.
- Recognize walking as a way to be physically active with friends and family members.
- Monitor their exertion during physical activity.
- Name one new way to get family members to eat more fruits and vegetables.



MATERIALS

- A watch that has a second hand
- A cell phone or quick access to a phone
- A safe walking route at a park, in a neighborhood, at a school, in a mall, or another easily accessible location
- Water (provide access to a water fountain or other water sources)
- A dry-erase board or large sheets of paper
- Markers
- *The Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults* handout (p. H – 6)
- *The Physical Activity Scoreboard* handout (p. H – 8)
- *The Physical Activity Pyramid* handout (p. H – 26)
- *The Let's Get Active* handout (p. H – 28)
- *The Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout (p. H – 29)
- *The Stretching Exercises* handout (p. H – 30)
- Pencils or pens

PREPARATION

1. Locate a safe outdoor or indoor walking route that will accommodate participants.
2. Become familiar with the content of each handout prior to implementing the lesson. Photocopy the *Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults*, *Physical Activity Scoreboard*, *Physical Activity Pyramid*, *Let's Get Active*, *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety*, and *Stretching Exercises* handouts for each participant. If you are teaching this lesson in a series, you may want to reproduce only the handouts that are new to the group.

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the *Recommended Minutes of Physical Activity for Adults* handout to each participant, and review the information. Explain to participants that to maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases, adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Explain that for most people, greater health benefits can be achieved by doing more physical activity. For example, to help manage body weight and prevent gradual weight gain, adults need 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity on most days of the week. To sustain weight loss, adults need 60 to 90 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day. Note that some people may need to consult with a health care provider before participating in this level of activity.
2. Distribute the *Let's Get Active* handout and pens or pencils to participants. Ask participants to complete the handout.
3. Ask participants to share their answers, and record their responses on the board or a sheet of paper for the class to see.
4. Review the list of responses with the class, and use the discussion to introduce the *Walking on the Path to Better Health* lesson. Explain some of the health benefits of walking. For example, it's great for improving cardiorespiratory fitness, it improves circulation, and it strengthens and tones leg muscles. Explain that walking is a fun and easy way to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day.
5. Distribute the *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout, and review it with participants. Engage participants in a warm-up by walking in place at a relaxed pace for 3 to 5 minutes.



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Provide participants with directions or maps that cover the walking route.
2. Group participants into pairs, and instruct participants to get to know their partner during the walk. Have participants ask their partners about their favorite fruit and vegetable; their favorite way to prepare them; and tips they use for getting their families to eat more fruits and vegetables. Then have participants ask their partners about their favorite physical activity; their favorite place for doing physical activity; and tips they use for getting their families to be more physically active.
3. Start the walk slowly, and gradually increase to a comfortable walking pace.
4. Have participants monitor themselves during the walk according to the chart on the *Physical Activity and Exercise Safety* handout. Have participants adjust their pace depending on how they feel.
5. Continue the walk for 15 to 20 minutes.
6. Cool down by gradually returning to a slower pace for the last 2 to 3 minutes.
7. Lead participants through a variety of slow stretches as described in the *Stretching Exercises* handout.
8. Conclude the lesson by reminding participants that brisk walking is an example of moderate-intensity physical activity. Explain to participants that they can meet their physical activity goals by taking 10-minute walks throughout the day, such as walking to the store, walking during their lunch break, walking at a mall, or walking after dinner with their family members. Next, distribute the *Physical Activity Scoreboard* handout to participants. Also, distribute the *Physical Activity Pyramid* handout. Encourage participants to use the *Physical Activity Scoreboard* at home to monitor their physical activity progress. Encourage participants to use the *Physical Activity Pyramid* handout to learn easy and fun ways to include physical activity in their daily lives.



Expansion Ideas

WALKABILITY CHECKLIST

Use the *Walkability Checklist* handout, and have participants work in groups to determine the walkability of their neighborhood. Pair the *Walkability Checklist* with the *Advocate for Fruits, Vegetables, and Physical Activity in Your Community* lesson as part of a multi-session class.

WALK TO THE PARK

Walk to a nearby park. Have participants bring a healthy snack or lunch for a group picnic. At the park, discuss the basic principles of safe, effective physical activity, and help participants develop a personal walking plan. Encourage participants to find ways to include their family members and friends in regular walking activity.

TARGET HEART RATE

During the walk and immediately after, use a watch and have participants take their pulse for 15 seconds and multiply the result by four. Have them compare their results to the *Target Heart Rate* handout to measure their exertion levels.

Tips

- Walk and time the route a day or two before the activity to be sure that the route is safe, accessible, and the appropriate distance.
- Increase the intensity level, if desired, by having participants pump their arms while they walk.
- Remind participants to drink plenty of water before, during, and after the activity.
- Invite a representative from YMCA, YWCA, or Parks and Recreation to present the lesson with you.

