

# A Women's Walking Training Program

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Our objective is to get women to the starting line of fitness. Regardless of your age or ability we aim to create opportunities in walking and running around the world. The resulting good health and personal empowerment is truly transformational.

Whether you want to begin a program for fitness, lose weight, reduce stress, reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease, become a competitive athlete, or just run or walk in a local fun run, consistent running and walking will get you there.

## First you have to get started.

As with all exercise programs, please consult your doctor before starting.

Good information is essential, and the following brief programs have been used successfully by thousands of women. They are from my best selling book, *Running and Walking for Women Over 40...the Road to Sanity and Vanity*. No matter what your age-- or gender! -- this book is an invaluable source. (It even has been used to train children).

Visit my website to purchase: [www.kathrineswitzer.com](http://www.kathrineswitzer.com)

## EVERYONE must walk before she can run.

The first time you step outside to start your walking program, we suggest wearing a watch; a comfortable, broken-in pair of shoes; and layers of clothing you can remove as you warm up.

Begin by walking purposefully for a few minutes. Whether it's five or fifteen minutes, **know when to say when**. Don't push, don't hurt and don't become breathless. HAVE FUN! Walking and running should always be fun, no matter how hard or long you exercise.

For the next three weeks, continue walking every other day. Each time you walk, add a minute and try to go just a bit faster, even if it's by two seconds.

**Tips: As with everything, start in moderation.**

- It's not necessary to walk every day as a beginner; but try for three times a week and know in the future you'll be aiming for more. And don't go too far, too fast.

***If you miss a workout, don't feel guilty.***

- We're all human. Just start again as soon as possible. If you miss many

days, you may need to start again from the beginning at a gradual pace. (Tip: it's easier to be consistent).

### ***Keep a training log.***

- Keep a record of how far you went; this is extremely important as it keeps you honest. And, it is motivating when you see how far you've gone. It's good information also to know how you felt before and after, weather and things you noticed along the way. Put a monthly calendar page up on the refrigerator door so you see it every day.

### **Intermediates move ahead. Beginners need more time.**

By the second or third week, some of you might be ready to move to a more challenging stage of exercise. A good guideline is to increase your distance or the amount of time you walk by 10% a week, but not until you feel **completely comfortable** with your current activity.

It might take weeks or months to get into a routine, depending upon each person's physical condition. This is usually the crossroads where a true beginner determines whether she will stay a walker or become a runner. If you know you want to stay a walker, go to the walking program below.

If you find yourself wanting to run, don't run an all-out sprint the first time. Try picking up the pace to a fast walk. The next step is to experiment with an easy **shuffle**. Faster than a walk, slower than a jog. You might think you look silly, but at least you're doing it! Pick out a landmark a short distance ahead—like the distance between telephone poles, or better, one minute on your watch—and shuffle along to it!

When you reach your distance, walk again until you catch your breath. Do this two or three times your first day of shuffles.

Repeat this process on all of your walks, adding more and longer running phases. Once you feel comfortable, you're ready for your running program.

### **A Walking Program: A Step-by Step Approach to a New Way of Living and Looking Great**

Walking is one of the most natural things we do. It's such a basic part of life that for a long time no one thought about it as a fitness activity. That's not the case anymore. As more and more people see the importance of exercise but are short on time, training or even the ability to participate in more vigorous sports, they've decided to look elsewhere for a workout. Fitness walking - walking with a purposeful stride, arms pumping, heart rate elevated provides women with a wonderful exercise alternative. You can burn fat, develop

muscle tone, reduce bone mass loss, improve your grace and carriage, and dramatically reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Walking is going on everywhere: on the streets where you live, in community fun walks and races, through walking club activities, and at shopping malls. You can walk anywhere, at almost any time. Most important, virtually everyone can walk - no matter what your current level of fitness or activity is.

If significant weight loss is a major goal for your exercise program, walking may be an excellent way to start. Each time your foot strikes the ground while walking, it's with the force of one and a half times your actual body weight; that increases to three and a half to eight times when running. Running provides too much pounding for someone who is overweight.

Just as there are progressive levels in running, there are different stages in walking.

**Walking form:** Walk holding your body in a natural upright posture with your back straight, shoulders down, and neck relaxed. Look straight ahead focusing three or four yards in front of you, not down on your feet.

Your heel should hit the ground first, then follow through your stride, pushing off with your toes. Hold your arms with your elbows bent at a 90° angle and pump them back and forth in an opposite rhythm to your feet - when you stride forward with your left foot, your right arm comes forward and vice versa.

Keep your stride at a natural length. If you want to walk faster, don't lengthen your stride. Take smaller, quicker steps instead. Also, don't lean forward as you walk. Good posture not only enhances your carriage, but also helps prevent injury.

### **A Program to Make You a Thirty-Minute Walker.**

Once you're able to comfortably walk for fifteen-minutes, it's time to look at the next stage: working toward being a thirty-minute walker. This means you will be able to do a thirty-minute fitness walk three or four times a week. It's the stage at which many of your overall fitness goals will begin to be realized.

Start each walking session with a gentle warm-up walk for three or four minutes to loosen your muscles. After you finish your workout, cool-down with a few more minutes of slow walking and then some gentle stretches.

#### **Becoming a 30-minute walker**

This program allows you gradually to build up to a thirty-minute walk over eight weeks. Not everyone will be able to do the program in that time. Follow

the schedule at a comfortable pace but one that challenges you to move forward.

The program is based on the hard-easy training method. You make progress in training by pushing yourself to do more, but your body needs time to recover from the extra effort. The day after a hard workout when you walked faster or did extra mileage, schedule a day off, do an easier workout - less pace or mileage - or switch to an alternative type of exercise like biking, swimming, or strength training. Make it your goal to walk three or four times a week, but don't walk more than six days a week - give yourself a day off. Start each workout gradually, warming up your muscles by slow-paced walking. When you've finished, complete a gradual slow down of your pace with stretching exercises to cool down and relax your body.

No one is judging you or holding you to a timetable. When you reach the point at which you can do a thirty-minute fitness walk as part of your regular routine, you'll have something that you can count on for the rest of your life. If it takes a little more time to get there, don't worry about it; you're in this for the long haul.

Week 1: Walk 10 minutes, rest 3 minutes, walk 5 minutes. Rest 1 minute, then repeat.

Week 2: Walk 10 minutes, rest 1 minute, walk 5 minutes. Rest 1 minute again, then repeat.

Week 3: Walk 10 minutes, rest 1 minute, walk 10 minutes. Rest 1 minute, then repeat.

Week 4 and 5: Walk 20 minutes each session.

Week 6 and 7: Walk 25 minutes each session.

Week 8: Walk 30 minutes each session. If you're comfortable after the first couple of weeks, you may want to speed up this timetable and complete the program in five or six weeks.

**TIP:** You should always be able to carry on a conversation while you're walking. If you can't, you're going too fast and should slow down.

### **Walking Farther and Faster: The Next Steps in Fitness Walking.**

*A personal note: Not only does walking feel good, but when you accomplish a distance, you are instinctively challenged to try to go farther. Many of us have never attempted this kind of physical test before. Once you know you can do it, you become curious about how much more you can do - and thrilled by the excitement of trying.*

After you've become a thirty-minute walker, you may simply want to continue to reap the benefits that accrue from that level of regular exercise. But if you feel you want to go on to new goals and levels of accomplishment, there are attractive options open to you. Two of the most interesting are going faster and going farther. Increasing your speed and mileage gives you a more potent aerobic workout with its conditioning and fat-burning benefits. It can also keep your program fresh so your workouts don't become boring or routine.

Try to become a forty-five-minute or a one-hour walker by adding a longer walk to your regular program. Select one day on your workout schedule for a longer walk and add gradually ten-minute increments to your workout until you reach a comfortable and invigorating longer distance. Always schedule a day off after your long walk for rest and recovery.

Here's a four-week program to follow to reach an hour. Bear in mind that these are only guidelines. It may take you longer to reach the next level comfortably. Don't go ahead until you are ready.

Week 1: Walk three days for 30 minutes each session. Walk 40 minutes for the fourth session of the week.

Week 2: Walk three days for 30 minutes each session. Walk 50 minutes for the fourth session.

Week 3: Repeat schedule for week 1.

Week 4: Walk three days for 30 minutes each session. Walk 60 minutes for the fourth session.

For more details on walking, for some of my personal anecdotes, tips and stories, for clothing guidelines, I encourage you to buy my [book](#).

[For those wishing to run: Running Program: Making the most of your running.](#)