

TAKING THE STEPS TO HEALTH

A few years ago the Surgeon General recommended that we get half an hour of exercise a day to maintain good health. We can get it all at once or spread out in shorter segments.

The American Diabetes Association's position statement on "[Diabetes Mellitus and Exercise](#)" supports the Surgeon General's recommendation. "The recent Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health underscores the pivotal role physical activity plays in health promotion and disease prevention," according to the position statement. "It recommends that individuals accumulate 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week."

The Diabetes Prevention Program showed that in 3234 people with IGT (Pre-Diabetes), those who walked or exercised five times a week for 30 minutes lost 5% to 7% of their body weight and reduced their risk of diabetes by 58% and for those over the age of 60, the reduction in diabetes risk was 71%, better than any drug used in the study.

30 minutes of exercise happens to be close to 10,000 steps. That means using one of the new electronic pedometers that will automatically count those steps for you and make it fun.

The idea of walking 10,000 steps every day started out as a Japanese fad known as "manpo-kei," which means "10,000-step meters" in Japanese. This simple idea of setting 10,000 steps as your daily goal is already the exercise program pushed by HealthPartners, a Minnesota managed care company, and by the Cooper Clinic in Dallas. It also seems that everyone from [Prevention Magazine](#) to [The New York Times](#) is writing about it.

If 10,000 steps sounds like a lot, it might help to know that the average person already walks about 3,000 to 5,000 steps a day. To double that really doesn't take much. Be sure to start gradually and add a few steps a day.

Just a few changes in your routine will help a lot. You can think of several that fit your lifestyle, but start with these:

- * Park your car farther away from the door at the shopping center or at your office.
- * Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- * On long drives take frequent rest stops to walk for 15 minutes or so.
- * Instead of killing time while waiting for an appointment, take a walk.

* Take your dog for more frequent walks (if you don't have a dog, get one).

How far do we walk when we take 10,000 steps? It depends on the length of your stride. But for most of us it's a bit over 5 miles.

There's no magic in it. It's just a nice round number. That's the beauty of it.

"It's inexpensive, low-tech, and doesn't require any expertise," says Catrine Tudor-Locke, research assistant professor at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. "You just snap it on and look at it every now and then."

Even though I already had two old-style mechanical pedometers, I bought one of the new electronic devices. Unlike their mechanical cousins, the newer electronic versions are extremely accurate. The pedometer I bought never seems to miss a step.

Accuracy is highest when you just measure the number of steps. It's when you go to convert steps to miles that you lose some precision. But that's a conversion that you really don't need to make.

Anyway, I just check my pedometer at the end of the day to see if I met my goal. Please excuse me now while I collect some of today's 10,000 steps

Fun Step Facts

- ?? 1 mile = 2,000-2,500 steps
- ?? 10,000 steps = 4-5 miles
- ?? Nine holes of golf, no cart = 8,000 steps
- ?? One city block is about 200 steps
- ?? 90-minute soccer game = 8,000 – 10,000 steps
- ?? Most people walk about 1,200 steps in 10 minutes. (Time yourself to find out how far you walk in 10 minutes!)

Step Conversion Chart

Your step counter will calculate your steps for most types of physical activity – including walking, running, tennis, soccer, basketball, and many others. When you participate in activities like cycling, swimming, or even lifting weights (light weights make a great wheelchair activity), you can still get step credit. Almost

every physical activity you do will count. Use the following conversion table to figure out the "steps" you take during common non-step exercise.

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