

CAN WALKING MAKE YOU FIT?

If you're not a regular gym-goer, don't sweat it. Two recent studies indicate you can improve heart and lung fitness by doing everyday activities, like raking leaves or walking. The studies, both published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, found that moderate changes in lifestyle -- like parking your car farther away from the mall entrance -- led to improvements in cholesterol ratios, blood pressure and body fat percentages among study group participants. According to sports medicine specialistS, you don't have to go to a health spa and do step aerobics and lift a ton of weight to stay fit.

The participants were divided into two groups: one spent 20 to 60 minutes doing vigorous exercise up to five days a week; the second incorporated so-called "lifestyle" exercise. Researchers found that after six months, both groups showed similar and significant improvements in cholesterol levels, blood pressure and body fat percentages.

WONDERFUL WALKING

Walking is a great form of exercise, with many health and fitness benefits. To get the most out of walking, you will need to move at a pretty good clip, at least three times a week. As you build strength and endurance, steadily increase your distance and pace.

The risk of accident or injury from walking is remarkably low. You can greatly reduce the chances of an accident simply by looking where you are going and keeping away from cars by staying safely on the path or sidewalk.



About Good Walking Shoes.....

Some people develop problems in the feet and legs. These can usually be avoided with proper walking technique and good shoes. Good shoes have several important features:

- Sturdy and supportive, with good arch supports and strong rubber or crepe soles.
- Breathable. Uppers should be leather or mesh.
- Cushioning under the heel should raise the heel about half an inch higher than the toe.
- Ample room in the toe box. You should be able to insert insoles, heel pads, or orthotics.
- Shoes should be wide enough across the forefoot. Many people have feet that are wide in front but narrow at the heel.
- A firm, but flexible sole. Replace your shoes when they start to wear out, or if the soles become too pliable.