

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Village Out-Patient Clinic - 100 Old Billerica Rd., Bedford, MA 01730

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The Health Benefits of Walking by Emily Robinson, NP



The month of June brings the promise of sunny skies and milder temperatures (we hope!). One of the greatest joys of better weather, and one of the greatest investments we can make in our health, is walking. We may not always think of walking as a particularly exceptional act, but the benefits of walking abound and it is something we should all be doing more of, if possible.

Walking for your health

Walking has been shown to have numerous benefits for our physical health. Multiple studies have found that walking increases longevity and helps maintain functionality as we age. We also know that those who walk regularly have lower risk of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. While these benefits are likely unsurprising, it may be more interesting to know that even regular, short walks of 15 or 20 minutes can help to curb sugar cravings and are a boost to the immune system. Walking is also highly beneficial for those with arthritis, reducing inflammation and joint pain. Those who walk more also have better balance and coordination, reducing the risk of a fall.



Walking for your happiness

Apart from the physical benefits of walking, the impacts on social and emotional health may be even stronger motivation to get moving.

Those who walk regularly have healthier brains than those who are more sedentary. A clinical trial performed by the American Geriatrics Society in 2015 found that walking maintains and improves memory and cognitive functioning, particularly in the area of executive functioning, or the brain's ability to focus on and complete tasks while processing multiple pieces of information.

Walking also lowers stress levels in the body and improves your mood. And something we may not often consider? Walking helps to build and maintain social connections. Planning a regular walk with a good friend is an investment in your relationship and your health and can hold you both accountable to sticking to your goals.



How much should you walk?

Current recommendations advise 30 minutes of activity at least 5 days per week but it is important to consider individual abilities. No single walking regimen will work for all people. If you are new to regular walking, building the habit slowly is safest. Walking for 30 minutes at a time is not always attainable even for regular walkers.

A helpful tip: break your walking into smaller chunks of time throughout the day. The health benefits are the same and it can be kinder to your body. It may be easy to dismiss the health benefits of walking when compared to more vigorous or strenuous activity.

However, we see that even small amounts of walking provide the same benefits and walking is one of the safest activities to participate in with a very low risk of injury.

The Safest Way to Lace Up

Be sure to wear supportive shoes and dress in layers. It is always best to walk during daylight hours. If you must walk at dawn or dusk (which is often the case in hotter weather), always use the sidewalk, wear bright, reflective clothing and never assume a driver or cyclist can see you. Increase hydration on days you exercise and avoid outdoor activity during the most intense heat of the day.



It is never too late to start walking! Start slowly, build up over time, and reap the benefits. Remember: some is better than none. Always speak with your medical provider before beginning a new physical activity.

Health Education Lecture

“The Brain, Aging and Memory Loss”

Jonathan Jackson, PhD, is the Director of the CARE Research Center at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Dr. Jackson will discuss the latest information on how the brain changes in healthy aging as well as in Alzheimer’s Disease and what you can do to keep your mind sharp.

Please join us on
Wednesday, June 12, 2019
10:30am —11:30am
Auditorium Center



WEAR SUNSCREEN

While outdoors don’t forget to wear your sunscreen. The Clinic has a list of recommended sunscreens and sunblocks available for you. Stop by the Clinic and pick up the list.



Have a happy and safe summer!
From the Clinic Staff: Susan, Debbie, Michelle, Judi and Donny.