

# Walking

Walking is the original exercise – we have been doing it for over 3 million years! Before modern transportation, our ancestors walked everywhere and usually carried something with them. They were physically fit! These days, there is a machine or gadget to do many daily tasks that used to require us to be physically active. We do not have to walk to school, work or the store, or even move to change the television channel. One result: Many adults and children are heavy or very heavy.

Walking is a good, all-around workout for the human body, with a low occurrence of injuries. As an educator of children, you are a powerful role model and play a key role in helping children establish physical activity as a daily habit they value and enjoy.

## Benefits Children Gain When They Walk

Walking . . .

- builds self-esteem
- develops a good wellness attitude
- builds strong bones
- develops good posture
- increases attentiveness
- stabilizes friendships
- increases or maintains muscle mass
- stabilizes blood pressure
- helps control disruptive behavior
- encourages use of senses
- helps control hyperactivity
- encourages drug-free living
- helps improve stress-coping ability
- improves physical coordination
- helps maintain healthy weight
- improves heart strength

Walking is inexpensive, requires no special equipment and can be done anytime, anywhere. The time it takes for a short walk is more than compensated by increased attentiveness and productivity for students and educators. But how much should kids walk?

A child in the fifth grade should walk at least 2000 steps per day (average 22" step length). This adds up to 0.8 miles and takes about 15 minutes. If a student walks 5 days per week during a 180-day school year, she or he can walk 144 miles per school year. Collectively, a class of 25 students can walk 3,600 miles.

For sixth graders, the minimum recommendation is 3000 steps per day. With a longer step length, this adds up to 1.4 miles and takes about 25 minutes. Collectively, a class of 25 students can walk 6,300 miles, if they walk 5 days per week during a 180-day school year.

Consider these ideas to increase walking:

- 5-minute walks prior to a test or quiz
- once-around-the-building walks instead of waiting in the cafeteria line
- before or after school walking clubs
- class walks to discuss and review key learning points