



Health Bulletin



Get Out And Walk During Arthritis Awareness Month

(NAPSA)—Arthritis, the most common cause of disability in the United States, affects one in five adults and nearly 300,000 children. It is predicted that by the year 2030, 67 million people will be affected by arthritis, up from current prevalence estimates of 46 million people. What's particularly disturbing is that the prevalence of osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, continues to rise even though it can often be prevented by staying active.

Patience White, M.D., chief public health officer for the Arthritis Foundation, is not surprised that these numbers continue to rise. "Americans continue to become more sedentary despite overwhelming evidence that there are tremendous benefits from walking as little as 10 minutes, three times a day. If we continue to ignore the importance of movement, as the nation's baby boomer population ages, the prevalence of arthritis will become staggering."

Fortunately, starting a walking program is easier than you might think. Dr. White's recommendations include:

Walk Three Times a Day

Walking for exercise should take low-to-moderate exertion. When you first start your program, your goal may be walking 10 minutes every day. Once this no longer requires much effort, consider increasing your goal to 10 minutes three times a day or 30 minutes



The Right Step—A simple walking plan could help reduce your risk of arthritis.

several times each week. As you reach this goal, change your route to include a slight incline. While it's important to consult your physician about your personal exercise plan and goals, also listen to your body! Consider keeping a journal to document your goals and the path to getting there.

Stretch

It is important to stretch before and after walking. Remember that walking involves more than just your legs, so be sure to stretch your lower back, chest and arms as well.

Bring a Friend

Having a walking partner is a great way to stay motivated! Not only can you encourage each other to stay active, but talking as you walk is a great way to pass the time. Whether a neighbor, co-worker or even man's best friend, find someone to walk with and

make a schedule that you can both stick to.

Maintain Your Ideal Weight

As people gain weight they increase the stress placed on their joints, particularly their knees. Not to mention that being overweight may cause a person to become tired quickly and not able to follow a healthy exercise regimen. Before beginning a walking program, work with a health care professional to determine your ideal weight and the best plan for getting there.

Celebrate Your Success

While the best reward for your efforts is better health, it's okay to treat yourself as well. Reward yourself as you reach each new goal. Celebrate by buying a new pair of walking shoes, new workout clothes or an MP3 player loaded with your favorite walking soundtrack.

Part of the Arthritis Foundation's efforts to get Americans walking is through its annual Arthritis Walk event held each May during Arthritis Awareness Month. Arthritis Walk events are held in communities across the nation to help raise awareness and generate funds for research and programs. Walkers can sign up alone or as part of a team and can come out to support a family member or friend. Dogs are welcome in most sites, too.

To learn more about getting involved in an Arthritis Walk near you, visit www.arthritis.org or call (877) 232-2898.