

Training Tips For Distance Walkers

(NAPSA)—Low risk and easy to start, walking continues to be a popular fitness activity at any age. The latest trend among today's walkers is distance walking—logging upwards of 26.2 miles at a time. Charities are also tapping into this trend—sponsoring non-competitive distance walks to raise funds and awareness for diseases such as breast cancer.

One of the most popular is the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer series of non-competitive walks that offer participants a choice of completing a marathon (26.2 miles) or a marathon and a half (39.3 miles) over a weekend. According to Kathleen Walas, president of the Avon Foundation (the Avon Walks' benefiting organization), those who volunteer to log the 26-plus miles for their favorite charity tend to approach the training for these events in much the same way they would a competitive marathon. "With proper training, walkers can greatly decrease their chances of injury," she says. But there is a difference for those who walk for a reason. "While completing a marathon is a personal victory, walking for a cause enhances that feeling of accomplishment in so many ways."

Because many of the participants in fundraising walks are new to distance walking, it is especially important that they are aware of basic training tips and strategies.

Feet First. According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, the ideal walking shoe should be stable from side to side and well-cushioned. One you may care to try—any walking shoe from RYKÅ, the only performance athletic footwear dedicated exclusively to women. RYKÅ footwear is designed to fit women better with a narrower heel and wider forefoot. Walkers should also wear thick, or double layer, lined non-cotton socks



More and more people are taking steps to raise money for the breast cancer cause.

to help cushion the soles.

Stretch. *Health* magazine recommends a brief warm-up and a few simple stretches before any walk. Walk in place for a few minutes before stretching, and stop to stretch for a few minutes every hour during your walk. Although walking primarily works the major leg muscles, stretching your back, shoulders and arms will help to alleviate tension and make your walk more enjoyable.

Hydrate! *Health* magazine also recommends that walkers drink 8 to 16 ounces of water per hour to stay hydrated. Sports drinks that replace electrolytes are also essential during longer walks. Without sufficient water consumption, you do not perspire sufficiently and therefore do not cool down enough and could overheat. Always carry a water bottle and plan walking routes with water stops.

Walk Smart and Safely. Obey the rules of the road. When crossing a street, look to your left, to your right and to your left again. Don't assume that a driver can see you and will give you the right of way. Watch out for hazards in the road, such as potholes, broken glass or uneven pavement. Be on guard for vehicles, bicycles, rollerbladers, and other pedestrians.

You can register for the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer events at www.avonwalk.org.