



A Walker's Handbook

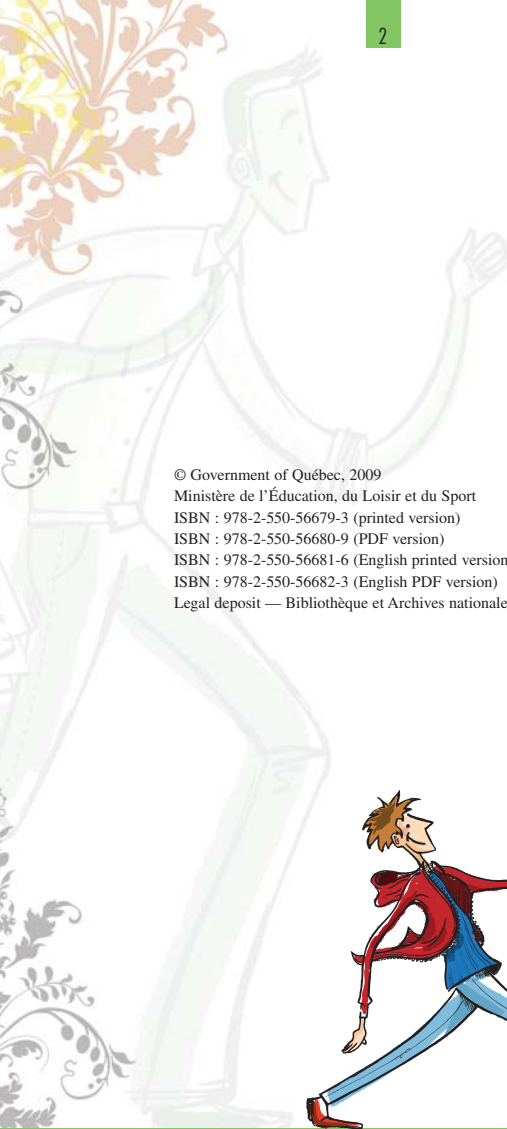
Walking ... in step with nature



Canada

Québec





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Walking is part of life. It's the most natural physical activity not to mention the most accessible and least expensive. If you are trying to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle, walking is safe and easy to integrate into everyday life.

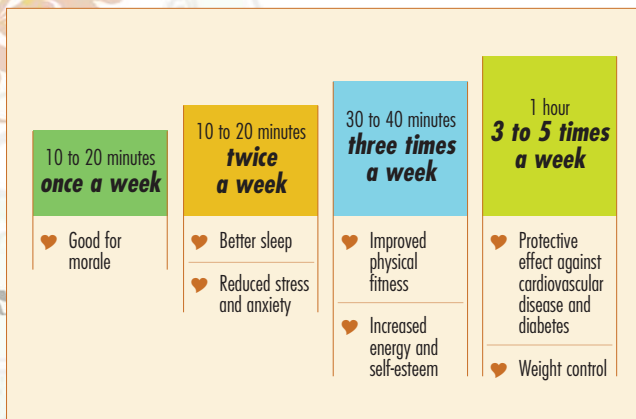
Objective: Take advantage of any opportunity to move!

It's not necessary to do a great deal of physical activity for it to have a positive effect on your health. In fact, sedentary people who increase their physical activity only slightly will see an improvement in both their physical and psychological well-being. If somebody who does an average amount of activity increases this activity, he or she will see improvements in aerobic capacity and muscular endurance.

No matter your level of physical activity, an increase will have a positive impact on your health. Even a little more can make a difference when it comes to physical activity and health. In fact, the more you move, the greater the benefits.



■ A little is good, but more is better!



Everybody benefits from being a little more active. Go at your own pace and gradually increase your activity. The most important thing is to focus on the pleasure it brings you. Try to perceive moments of physical activity as time for yourself; time that brings you enjoyment.

■ Physical activity: simple and effective!

Be it for recreation, to get somewhere, to stay in shape, to relax, to socialize or simply to explore your neighbourhood parks, any reason for walking is a good one. If you integrate walking into your lifestyle it will become second nature. For example, if you're a night owl, don't try getting up at dawn or you may end up giving up altogether. Give yourself the best chances of succeeding; choose the time that suits you best.

■ At work, take the stairs

In addition to walking, taking the stairs is an easy and effective way to integrate physical activity into your daily life. You'll be surprised to see that it's often faster than waiting for the elevator! But, most importantly, it's great for your health because you are improving the muscular strength in your legs and your cardiorespiratory endurance.

Boycott the elevators and use the stairs every day. If there are too many stairs to climb, do a few floors and then go up the rest of the way in the elevator. Challenge yourself by adding a floor each week.

■ Choose to walk

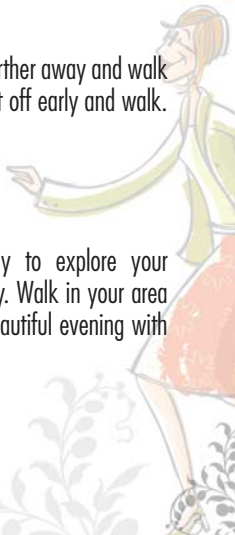
Integrating walking into your daily routine is another way to become physically active.

- Do your shopping on foot.
- Walk to work.

If it's too far to walk all the way, park your car a little farther away and walk the rest of the way. If you use public transportation, get off early and walk.

■ Discover your neighbourhood or community on foot

Walking around the neighbourhood is a great way to explore your community and get into the habit of walking every day. Walk in your area to discover a historic site, walk your dog or enjoy a beautiful evening with your spouse or the whole family.



You can quickly evaluate the walkability of your community by completing a brief questionnaire, which can be found in the section "Publications, matériel et liens utiles" under the heading "Chez vous, comment ça marche?" at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/rva. Clicking on "la version originale" will lead you to the *Walkability Checklist* on the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Web site. This site also includes suggestions for improving the walkability of your area.

■ Take a hike

There are great trails, provincial parks and sites in Québec that are worth exploring. In the fall, take in the splendours of nature and in winter, dig out your snowshoes.

To locate Québec's many regional parks, consult tourist guides for your region. You could also look on the SEPAQ (www.sepaq.com) and Parks Canada (www.pc.gc.ca) Web sites for information about provincial and national parks as well as wildlife reserves. The Fédération québécoise de la marche produces a list of places to walk in a publication entitled *Répertoire des lieux de marche au Québec* and a guide on snowshoeing and walking in winter entitled *Raquette et marche hivernale au Québec*. You can purchase these two publications in bookstores.

Regardless of your lifestyle, it is important that you walk for your own pleasure: don't think of it as "exercise" or as a "strenuous effort," just try to enjoy it.

■ Step by step: A made-to-measure walking program

The following is a walking program designed to allow you to progress at your own rate and reach your goal. It was created for people who want to start walking and who have no health problems. It spans a 12-week period and

enables you to record the number of times per week you walk and the duration of each walk or the number of steps (read the section “Calculating Your Steps” further along). Remember that a walking program that works for you must take into account your availability, your level of motivation and your current fitness level.

- The first thing you need to do is set a goal. Be careful! If you set your goal too high, you might get discouraged and give up. Set a realistic goal for yourself and make changes little by little. For example, you could increase your walks by 5 to 10 minutes daily. The important thing is to walk regularly; you can always aim for 40, 50 or 60 minutes daily walks later.
- Next, you need to choose your starting point in the walking program according to your current level of physical fitness. If you already walk 20 minutes a day, you could start at level 4. If you don't walk very much or not regularly, start at the first level.
- If you like, you could evaluate your cardiovascular endurance using the 1.6-km walk test before starting the program. For more information, consult the section “Physiquement actif?” at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/rva (French only).
- Do you want to work a little harder? Increase your speed, your distance or even your intensity by walking uphill or up stairs, swinging your arms or varying your effort; for example, you could alternate between walking fast for one minute and walking slowly for two minutes.

Be careful! Experienced walkers who want to walk with weights (e.g. in hands or around wrists, ankles, torso) in order to increase the intensity of their walks must do so gradually because, although this does slightly increase the number of calories burned and build muscle mass, it can also increase blood pressure and put additional stress on joints (knees, hips),

which can increase your chances of injury. It is better to use one of the methods mentioned above to increase intensity than to use weights.

- Vary your route. Breaking monotony will help you maintain and even reinforce your motivation.
- Did you miss some of your walks? Not to worry! Just pick up where you left off. If you stopped for several days or weeks, return to the previous level.
- Move up a level when you feel ready. You can stay at the same level for as long as you want.

Get walking! And keep the rhythm . . . your rhythm!

■ 12-week walking program

Recommended Progress

	Day 1 min/step	Day 2 min/step	Day 3 min/step	Day 4 min/step	Day 5 min/step	Day 6 min/step	Day 7 min/step
Level 1	10/1200	10/1200	15/1800	10/1200	15/1800	10/1200	10/1200
Level 2	15/1800	10/1200	15/1800	15/1800	20/2400	15/1800	15/1800
Level 3	10/1200	20/2400	15/1800	15/1800	25/3000	20/2400	20/2400
Level 4	20/2400	25/3000	20/2400	20/2400	25/3000	20/2400	25/3000
Level 5	25/3000	30/3600	25/3000	20/2400	25/3000	25/3000	30/3600
Level 6	25/3000	30/3600	30/3600	25/3000	30/3600	25/3000	35/4200
Level 7	25/3000	30/3600	40/4800	30/3600	30/3600	35/4200	40/4800
Level 8	25/3000	30/3600	40/4800	30/3600	40/4800	30/3600	45/5400
Level 9	30/3600	40/4800	40/4800	30/3600	40/4800	40/4800	45/5400
Level 10	30/3600	40/4800	45/5400	30/3600	50/6000	40/4800	50/6000
Level 11	40/4800	40/4800	45/5400	40/4800	50/6000	45/5400	55/6600
Level 12	45/5400	45/5400	55/6600	45/5400	60/7200	50/6000	60/7200

■ Calculating your steps

Use a pedometer. This little device is used to record the number of steps you walk and it will help keep you motivated. It might be just what you need to get motivated to walk every day, or almost.

Attach it to your belt or your pants at the waist, halfway between your bellybutton and your hip (in line with your knee) so that it stays vertical to detect movement. You can find pedometers at an affordable price in electronics stores, drugstores, sporting goods stores and department stores.

It is recommended that you test the pedometer before purchasing it. To do so, attach it to your belt as indicated above, set it to zero and take 20 steps at your usual pace. If the pedometer displays between 19 and 21 steps, it is considered reliable. If it displays between 18 and 22 steps, its margin of error is considered acceptable. If it displays anything higher or lower, reposition it at your waist and try again. If the pedometer repeatedly fails this test, do not buy that particular model.



Tips for day-long use of a pedometer

Evaluate the number of steps you take each day.	Determine which category you fall into.	Set a realistic goal for yourself.	Observe your progress and present yourself with new challenges.
<p>For a few days, wear your pedometer from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed and record your result.</p> <p>Day 1 : _____</p> <p>Day 2 : _____</p> <p>Day 3 : _____</p> <p>Note: Every 3600 steps correspond to approximately 30 minutes of walking.</p>	<p>If you walk . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • less than 4000 steps . . . you are sedentary • between 4000 and 7000 steps . . . you are slightly active • between 7000 and 10 000 steps . . . you are moderately active • more than 10 000 steps . . . you are active! 	<p>Aim for over 4000 steps and work your way up to 7000 steps per day or, even better, 10 000.</p> <p>By following the walking program, you increase your daily walks by 5 to 10 minutes, which represents between 600 and 1200 extra steps.</p>	<p>By keeping a record of the number of steps taken each day in the progress chart, you can monitor your progress. Once you have reached your goal, set a new one.</p>
<p>Average number of steps per day:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Category*:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Goal:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>steps/day</p>	

* With the exception of activities that you practise that cannot be counted by the pedometer (e.g. biking, swimming, kayaking).

From the document *Getting into the pedometer habit* produced by ACTI-MENU.

■ Put a spring in your step

- 1) **In a group or a pair?** If you don't like walking alone, one or more partners could motivate you to walk regularly. Why not enroll in a walking club? Many people find that there are a number of advantages to joining a club: friendship, regularity, safety, improved self-esteem, variety of routes. For a list of walking clubs in your area, consult the Web site of the Fédération québécoise de la marche at www.fqmarche.qc.ca.
- 2) **A little rhythm!** Listening to music on a Walkman or MP3 player will help you keep up your pace and make you feel energized.
- 3) **Mix things up!** There are a number of different environments you can walk in. Using an accessory while walking can also be fun.

Walking poles: Nordic walking is practised with poles that help propel your body. In addition to improving your physical fitness and incorporating muscle groups from both your upper and lower body, it helps reduce stress in the knees. It can be practised on all types of terrain, alone or in a group.

In water: Water walking is an effective exercise because it uses the resistance of water to increase the level of difficulty. It is ideal for people who are overweight or have joint pain.

Weatherproof: Indoor walking generally takes place during closing hours in malls. Anybody can walk indoors, but it is most popular among people over the age of 50.

Pushing a stroller: “Cardio-stroller” is generally practised in a group. Walking is combined with other exercises to improve and maintain the physical fitness of the parent pushing the baby.

- 4) **Reward yourself!** Sign a personal commitment contract and post it where you can see it (e.g. on a bulletin board, in your office, on your fridge). It will help motivate you to reach your goal. Once you have reached your goal, award yourself a certificate of merit. You can find a French version of the certificate on the Web site of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/rva.



■ Onward and upward!

Walking requires very little equipment; however, doing it regularly does require discipline. Keep in mind that making your walks enjoyable will make it easier to increase their duration, intensity and frequency. It's the best way to make it a habit, maintain your motivation and stick to it.

Put your best foot forward and make the most of your walks by consulting the numerous articles on the Web site at www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/rva (French only), where you will find tips on shoes, apparel, safety, warm-up exercises and walking techniques.





