



Celebrate *healthy living* newsletter

Week 3 | 2019

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Your Feet Were Made for Walking

When you start walking, or increase the intensity of any type of fitness program, your feet will take a beating. If you are carrying extra pounds, you will feel even greater pressure on your feet. In this article, we will talk about foot motion when walking, selecting the right shoes, and stretching your feet and toes.

As you walk this week, pay attention to your walking step. It should be a rolling motion where you strike the ground first with your heel, roll through the step from heel to toe, and finally push off with your toe. Bring the back leg forward, striking again with the heel and rolling through. It is important to have flexible shoes so you are able to roll through the step. Your shoes may be too stiff if you find that your feet are slapping down rather than rolling through.

You may find that your shin muscles tire or they can be sore until they are strengthened. This is natural when you first start walking, wear different shoes, or change your foot motion.

Walking shoes are the most important part of your walking/exercise gear. Get shoes that are right for your walking style. The best shoe is the one that fits you best, and gives you proper support, flexibility, and cushioning. A shoe fitting expert can help you find the best option for you. Also, keep the following qualities in mind when determining how well a walking shoe meets your needs.

First, check for flexibility. You should be able to bend and twist the shoes to accommodate the “rolling” motion described above. Next, make sure the shoes you consider have a relatively flat heel. Look for shoes with a heel drop of fewer than 8 millimeters or even one with zero drop. Finally, go for

a shoe that does not have a flared heel. Since walkers strike with the heel first, a big flared heel is not desirable. Flared heels are preferred for trail shoes and for walking on uneven surfaces.

Remember that shoes do not last forever. Most walking shoes will generally last only 500 miles. Walking in worn out shoes makes you more prone to injury and tired feet. It can be difficult to



determine when your shoes need to be replaced. Try alternating two pairs of walking shoes. Start wearing the second pair 6 weeks after you start the first pair and you will be able to feel when the first pair is worn out.

Stretching your feet and toes regularly is another way to prevent injuries and relieve tired aching feet. Stretching before and after walking is recommended. While seated, raise one foot and use your toes to write your name; repeat with the other foot. Next, with feet on the floor, spread your toes apart and hold for a few seconds, then release. Repeat 10 times. The last stretch is a foot roll. Use a golf ball, or tennis ball, and roll it back and forth from your toes to your heels. For added benefit, use a frozen juice can for your foot roll.

Stretch Your Hip Flexors

Hip flexors are a group of muscles that allow you to lift your knees toward your chest and to bend forward from the hips. Tight hip flexors are a common problem for people who spend a lot of time in a seated position. As a result of these muscles being tight, you could also have low back pain, hip pain, and injury.

Simple hip strengthening and stretching exercises can keep these muscles from getting tight and can reduce your risk of injury and pain.

Hip Flexor Stretches

Seated Butterfly Stretch

This is a good stretch for your inner thighs, hips, and lower back. When doing this stretch, make sure you lean forward from your hips rather than rounding your lower back.



1. Sit on the floor with your back straight, soles of your feet pressed together, and your knees dropped to the sides as far as they will comfortably go.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Grasp your feet and ankles and slowly lean forward, keeping your spine straight. Hold this pose for 10 to 30 seconds.

To reduce stress on your knees, move your feet

away from your body. To increase the stretch, move your feet toward your body.

[Here is a demonstration of the Butterfly Stretch.](#)

Basic Hip Flexor Stretch

1. Start in a half-kneeling position on the floor. Put a cushion or two on the floor for your knee if you have knee stiffness. The back leg is the one you are about to stretch.
2. Hold a stick (ex. mop handle) in front of you and actively push it down into the ground. This will engage your core and help you do the stretch correctly.
3. Keep your body upright, squeeze your butt, and lean forward at the hips to feel the stretch.

[Here is a demonstration of the Hip Flexor Stretch.](#)

Hip Strengthening Exercises:

Lunge:

1. From a standing position, place hands on your hips and look straight ahead. Take a generous step forward with your right foot.
2. Bend your extended (right knee) and transfer your weight onto that leg. Continue to lower yourself slowly into the lunge. Your right knee should be directly above your right ankle and your left knee hovers just above the ground.
3. Step back into a standing position and repeat with your left leg.



You can also do a “walking lunge” as [demonstrated here](#).

Straight Leg Raise:

This move will help strengthen your knees and hip flexors.

1. Lie on your back with your palms at your side, left leg extended and right leg bent.
2. Lift your straight leg up until both knees meet and hold for 2 seconds. Slowly lower your straight leg.
3. Repeat 10 to 20 times on each side.

[Demonstration of the straight leg raise.](#)

Foods that Protect Your Health

Eating foods with a rainbow of colors is sound nutritional advice. Though the message is simple, it is supported through ongoing research showing that, in addition to vitamins and minerals, vegetables and fruits contain phytonutrients that provide protective health benefits. These phytonutrients appear to protect the cells in your body from damage caused by harmful compounds in food and the environment. They also stop cancer cell growth in a variety of ways. Read more about the protective benefits of fruits and veggies here: <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3252.pdf>

While fruits and vegetables are some of the most nutritionally powerful foods you can eat, they often get tossed because they can spoil rapidly if not stored properly, you may not have a plan for the produce you purchased, or you might simply forget they are there.

Some fruits and vegetables should be stored in the refrigerator. Others — such as potatoes, onions, winter squash, and garlic — should be kept in a cool, dark, dry cabinet. For a complete guide to storing produce, and other items that should be refrigerated, keep this resource handy. <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3130.pdf>

One of the best ways to use bits of leftover fruits, and even veggies, is in a smoothie. There are countless ideas for combining fruits/veggies in a smoothie and you should also experiment with what works for you and your family. A general guide to design your own smoothie is to have a cold element, such as frozen fruit; a liquid, such as fruit juice, milk, etc.; and something to thicken the smoothie, such as yogurt, bananas (can be frozen), kale, etc.

If you are new to smoothie making, this recipe can get you started. If you don't have frozen blueberries, try frozen pineapple, cherries, mangoes, or peaches. You can throw any leftover fruits that are about to spoil, or that you won't have time to eat before they go bad, into the freezer and pull them out later to use in a yummy, healthy smoothie!



Blueberry Blast Smoothie

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 cups frozen unsweetened blueberries (*do not thaw*)
- ½ cup orange juice (*calcium-fortified preferred*)
- ¾ cup low-fat or nonfat vanilla yogurt
- ½ medium frozen banana
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Place blueberries, orange juice, yogurt, banana, and vanilla into blender container.
3. Cover securely and blend for 30 to 35 seconds or until thick and smooth. For thinner smoothies, add more juice; for thicker smoothies, add more frozen fruit.
4. Pour into 2 glasses and serve immediately. Store leftovers in the refrigerator or freeze for a cool treat!



Nutrition Information per serving:

214 calories
2.5 g fat (1g saturated fat);
44 g carbohydrates
6 g protein
5 g fiber
163 mg sodium

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