A Step-by-Step Guide to Establishing Walking Groups in Your Community

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Acknowledgement

The Walk Your Heart to Health™ program was designed, implemented and evaluated by the Detroit Healthy Environments Partnership, a community-based participatory research partnership that has been working together since 2000 to understand and address contributors to high risk of heart disease in Detroit, Michigan. Partners of the Healthy Environments Partnership have included: Brightmoor Community Center, Butzel Family Center, Chandler Park Conservancy, the Detroit Health Department, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation, Eastside Community Network, Friends of Parkside, Henry Ford Health System, Institute for Population Health, Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision, the University of Michigan School of Public Health, and Detroit community members. Funding for the Walk Your Heart to Health program was provided by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (MD R24 001619). The material presented in this manual is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, its directors, officers, or staff.

Intended Audience

This manual is designed for organizations and individuals who are interested in starting a walking group in their community. Walk Your Heart to Health is a group walking program that emphasizes social support and group cohesion. It seeks to address common challenges to walking in urban areas and to build on community strengths (e.g., community-based organizations). It is especially designed for those who live in areas with fewer resources for recreation, where the environment is more challenging for physical activity, or those who simply prefer walking with others in a group. The program meets the minimum recommendations for physical activity, and can be adapted for those who wish to walk at differing paces or distances.
Table of Contents

Background
The Healthy Environments Partnership ......................................................... 4
Why Walk? ........................................................................................................ 5
The Walk Your Heart to Health Study ........................................................... 6
Walk Your Heart to Health Walking Groups: Core Components ....... 8

Guide to Developing, Starting and Maintaining Your Community Walking Group

Step 1: Identify your goals, setting, and key partners ............. 11
Step 2: Identify and prepare walking group facilitators ......... 17
Step 3: Select and create outdoor walking routes ................. 21
Step 4: Develop walking group safety protocols .................. 23
Step 5: Establish a walking group schedule and format ........ 25
Step 6: Create a process for registering or joining your group ... 27
Step 7: Publicize your walking group ........................................... 29
Step 8: Kick off your walking group .............................................. 31
Step 9: Evaluating and financing your walking group ........... 33
Step 10: Maintaining your walking group ................................. 37

Toolkit ........................................................................................................... 39

Resources ................................................................................................... 87
Background

The Detroit Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP) is a community-based participatory research partnership that has been working together since 2000 to understand and address contributors to high risk of heart disease in Detroit, Michigan. Community-based participatory research or CBPR is a process which engages partners from academic institutions, public health service and community organizations and members. Partners work together during each step of the research process, including making joint decisions about their collective work.

Working closely with community residents and leaders, HEP developed a multifaceted intervention to promote heart health, and make Detroit a heart-healthy city. This intervention included a walking group program designed to promote physical activity, enhance skills and experience among community members, develop a network of community and faith-based organizations to support walking, and support changes in built, social and policy environments to promote physical activity and cardiovascular health.

Current HEP partners include: Chandler Park Conservancy, Detroit Health Department, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation, Eastside Community Network, Friends of Parkside, Henry Ford Health System, the University of Michigan School of Public Health, and Detroit community members.

Funding for the Walk Your Heart to Health™ program has come from multiple sources, including the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (MD R24 001619), the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (R01ES10936, R01ES10688) and the Aetna Family Foundation. The material presented in this manual is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the views of the National Institutes of Health, the Aetna Foundation, or their directors, officers, or staff.

For additional information about the Healthy Environments Partnership, please see www.hepdetroit.org.
Why Walk?

Walking is a fun and easy way to get exercise. It can be done anywhere, poses a low risk of injury, does not require training or special equipment, and can be sustained into old age. For these reasons, walking is the most common form of physical activity among individuals of all backgrounds. Walking is also good for heart health. Brisk, regular walking can help reduce blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose levels, and can help individuals maintain a healthy body weight.

Walking is beneficial to your health regardless of whether you walk alone or as part of a group. Some people find it helpful to walk with a group because they enjoy the company, find it motivating to have others who expect to walk with them, or because they feel safer. The Walk Your Heart to Health™ program is especially designed for those who wish to walk as part of a group.

What the research says

Physical activity is important for a healthy body and mind. Regular exercise feels good and helps reduce stress. It also decreases the risk of heart disease and other chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, some cancers, and obesity. Yet nearly half of all adults in the United States do not get enough exercise. Certain groups have especially low levels of physical activity, such as those with lower incomes, African Americans and Latinos, and residents of urban areas where there are fewer places to be physically active, such as trails and recreation centers.

How much should I walk?

The American Heart Association recommends that adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. This can be a brisk 30 minute walk five days per week, a 50 minute walk three days per week, or any other combination that reaches 150 minutes or more of walking in a week. The Walk Your Heart to Health™ program meets these minimum recommendations, and can be adapted for those who wish to walk at differing paces or distances. See Resources (p. 86 ) for more details on the American Heart Association’s physical activity guidelines, including information about walking.

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What is the WYHH study?

The Walk Your Heart to Health (WYHH) study was developed for residents of low-to-moderate income communities interested in increasing their physical activity levels and promoting heart health. WYHH grew out of conversations with Detroit residents regarding challenges and opportunities within their neighborhoods related to walking. Between 2008 and 2012, a total of 603 Detroit residents aged 18 and older participated in one of 30 walking groups. Approval for research on human subjects was granted by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board on January 31, 2008. The ClinicalTrials.gov identifier is NCT02036593.

What kind of information was collected?

Information was collected from walking group participants at three points in time: Before participants started walking, after they had walked for eight weeks, and at the end of the walking groups (after 32 weeks). These included:

- Health measurements (e.g., blood pressure, blood lipid and glucose levels)
- Body mass index (a measure of obesity)
- Daily steps (collected using a pedometer)
- Questionnaire covering a variety of topics (e.g., challenges to walking, attitudes about walking, diet, and mental well-being)

Collecting this information allowed researchers to evaluate the effect the program was having on behavior, heart health and overall well-being.

What did participation involve?

Walking groups ran for 32 weeks and were hosted within community or faith-based organizations (e.g., churches, nonprofits) in Detroit neighborhoods. Groups met three times per week for 1.5 hours each time. Walking groups were led by Community Health Promoters, staff members who were also community residents with strong social and facilitation skills.

“I loved it! The people in the group and the Community Health Promoters, we became family...Everybody in my household walks, I changed my diet & lost weight. The program should never end…”

“I am now off my two heart meds...my doctors are so impressed. They want to know how I did it, I told them I walked!”

– Walk Your Heart to Health™ Program Participants
What did we learn?

Walking group members saw significant health improvements! For example:

**Participation in walking groups increased physical activity.** Participants walked more steps each day they were part of the program, including days when they did not walk with their walking group. They walked even more on days they attended walking group sessions compared to days when they did not. In other words, the more sessions participants attended, the greater the increase in their physical activity levels.

**Physical activity was associated with a reduced risk of heart disease among walkers.** Participants in the walking groups had significant reductions in the likelihood of high blood pressure. They also experienced significant decreases in several other heart disease risk factors, including total cholesterol, blood glucose, and body mass index (overweight and obesity). The more group members walked, the better the health outcomes!

See Resources (p. 88) for links to peer-reviewed journal articles detailing the WYHH study design, planning process and key findings.
Walk Your Heart To Health Walking Groups: Core Components

The Walk Your Heart to Health program is designed to increase walking among those who are less active and to strengthen social networks and support for walking. It is especially designed to promote physical activity for residents of neighborhoods where there may be fewer opportunities or supports for physical activity.

While the WYHH program can be easily adapted to different contexts, there are several key dimensions of the program that WYHH researchers have identified as essential to achieving the desired health benefits. These “core components” include:

1. Host a walking group session 3 times per week, building up to 50 minutes of walking per session.

   Meeting three times per week offers participants more opportunities to walk and achieve the 150 minutes per week of physical activity recommended by the American Heart Association. If possible, groups should aim to meet for 60-80 minutes total, including a 50 minute walk. Group members are also encouraged to walk on other days of the week. More is better! The duration and pace of the walk will depend on participants: slower and shorter walks may be appropriate for participants with some physical limitations.

   Every walk should include a warm up and cool down period, in addition to the walk itself. See Toolkit #1 for warm up, cool down, and stretching tips and exercises.

   Here is a sample schedule for an 80-minute walking group session that you can adapt to meet your needs (see Step 5 for a more detailed walking group format):
   - **Warm up**: 15 minutes
   - **Walk**: 50 minutes
   - **Cool down**: 15 minutes

2. Provide suitable space for indoor and outdoor walking year round.

   Ideally, walking groups are based at a host organization or other location with access to indoor space where walkers can meet, use bathroom facilities, and walk inside when necessary (see Step 1). Whether you are an individual or community organization looking to start a walking group, there are a number of factors to consider when determining if a space is a good “home base” for your group.

   If you are a faith-based or other community organization with a space that meets the criteria below, opening your doors to a neighborhood walking group can provide an important resource to your community!

   Here are some things to consider regarding a host organization or site for walking groups:

   - **Location**: A site that is easy for neighborhood residents to access, such as those within walking distance of participants’ homes, on a bus line, or with ample parking, is ideal.

   *Samaritan Center in Detroit offers an indoor track, perfect for walking during inclement weather.*
• **Indoor facilities:** An air conditioned or heated indoor space for walking can improve safety and comfort during periods of extreme heat or cold. This can be particularly important for young, elderly or otherwise more vulnerable walkers. A site with restrooms and drinking fountains is also ideal.

• **Walking routes:** Facilities located near parks, walking trails, or other outdoor recreational activities are ideal. For sites located on busy roadways, access to sidewalks or other walking areas that are separated from traffic can help improve safety.

• **Hours of operation:** Your host facility or site must be open and available during the times that your walking group is scheduled to meet. The timing of your walking group should be convenient for walkers. For example, if your walking group is made up of stay-at-home parents or retirees, a day time walking group may work well. If the majority of walkers in your group are working, early evening may be more convenient.

3. **Facilitate group cohesion.**
People are more likely to attend walking groups in which group members feel closely connected to one another. Developing a strong sense of group identity can help build connectedness and cohesion within your walking group (see Step 2).

Consider the following strategies:

• **Select a group name:** Identifying a group name is one way that your group can develop a sense of shared identity. Some examples of previous WYHH group names include: “Soul Steppers,” “Farwell Swaggers,” “Guardians of the Dangerous Curves,” and “Walk in the Park.”

• **Develop team goals and agreements:** Working together toward shared goals can help build a sense of comradery among team members. For example, a group might set a collective goal for the number of steps (or miles) they will walk in a month. Then each week they may color in a thermometer illustrating each group member’s steps toward that goal (See Toolkit #2-4).

• **Group photo:** Take a group photo at your first meeting and share it with each group member. Continue to take and share photos throughout the program.

• **Celebrate special occasions and accomplishments:** Build relationships between team members by organizing birthday and holiday celebrations or gatherings to celebrate group milestones.

• **Organize events outside of the walking group:** Create ample opportunities outside of walking for group members to get to know one another. For example, plan a group picnic at a local park following a walking group session.

4. **Identify and train walking group facilitators.**
Walking group facilitators are community members who have received basic training to facilitate walking groups in a safe and effective manner. Training includes basic knowledge of walking and heart health, strategies for identifying safe walking routes, and building a sense of connection among members of your walking group (see Step 2).
Developing, Starting And Maintaining Your Community Walking Group

While the steps within this written manual are presented one after the other, developing and maintaining your walking group is in practice a continuous process with no clearly defined start or end point (see Image 1). You will consider how to fund and evaluate your program prior to initiating your walking group, and on an ongoing basis. You may use your evaluation results to secure future funding. With every walking group session you conduct, you will also learn valuable new information that you will use to improve your next session or program. You will continue to cultivate relationships with your existing partners, and identify new ones. Over time, participants will naturally drop out of your program, so you will regularly publicize your walking group in order to recruit new participants. Facilitators may come and go, and new ones will be identified and trained. Central to this process, and to maintaining your walking group over time, are strong relationships and cohesion between group members.

Walking group photo with Downtown Detroit in the background.

Image 1: Developing and maintaining your walking group is a continuous process.
Identify Your Goals, Setting And Key Partners

**Identify your goals in starting a walking group**

The first step in planning your walking group is to establish a clear understanding of what you hope to accomplish. For example:

- Do you want to help residents of a particular neighborhood improve their health through physical activity?
- Do you hope to help promote a stronger sense of community and capacity for walking in a particular place (e.g., neighborhood) or among a specific group (e.g., faith-based organization)?
- Do you want to increase opportunities for social interaction and support among a population that may be more isolated (e.g., seniors)?

Your answers to these kinds of questions will allow you to develop clear goals and objectives, and will help you identify your community, setting and key partners. A clear understanding of what you hope to accomplish will also help as you consider how to evaluate your walking group (see Step 9) - that is, how you will know if your walking group is effective in reaching its goals.

As noted above, the WYHH walking groups were designed to promote walking among those who are less active and to strengthen social networks and support for walking in neighborhoods where there may be fewer opportunities for physical activity. However, they can be adapted to many groups and locations - consider your goals up front, and be sure that you design your walking groups with them in mind.

**Identify the community or group you wish to reach**

An initial step in planning your walking group is to establish a clear understanding of who you want to engage in your walking group. For example:

- If your organization is based in a particular community, you may want to think about offering walking groups for members of the community generally. Or you may have a specific group in mind – for example, older residents, those currently facing health issues, or stay-at-home parents.
- If your organization is faith-based, you may consider offering a walking group for members of your place of worship, or for people who live nearby.
- If your organization is a day care center or other youth serving organization, perhaps you want to consider a walking group for parents or caregivers.
There is a particular need for walking groups and other opportunities for physical activity within communities with low-to-moderate incomes. These communities may have lower levels of physical activity and higher risk of chronic conditions, in part due to limited opportunities for physical activity.

If your organization is located within such a community, offering walking groups can be particularly important. You may want to consider how to design your walking group in a way that will support participation by those with limited incomes and perhaps less flexible work schedules.

Understanding the unique needs of the people you are trying to reach with your walking group will help shape many of the decisions that you will need to make. For example:

- The time that the walking group meets will depend on when your participants are available (after school? after work? during the day when their children are at school?).
- The length of the routes you select may depend on the age and overall health of your participants (see Step 5).
- The location of the walking group may be influenced both by the location of a host site organization, and access to transportation (e.g., is it on a bus route?).

As you consider who you would like to participate in your walking group, you may want to also identify current walking programs. For example:

- If there already is a walking group in your area, you might ask if there is a particular group that it serves.
- You might also want to find out where it is located, when the group meets, and other details. This will allow you to consider offering your walking group for other audiences or at different times in order to expand the range of opportunities available to community members.

Select a location for your walking group

Whether you are an organization planning to host a walking group, a community group working with a partner organization to establish and/or host a group, or an individual hoping to start a group in your community, you will want to consider a variety of factors when selecting a site.

While many groups prefer to walk outdoors when possible (see Toolkit #5-6 for tips on walking in...
cold and hot weather), access to an indoor space promotes convenient and safe year-round walking when conditions are poor (e.g., icy sidewalks, extreme heat, heavy rain). An indoor space allows walkers to meet, warm up and cool down, use the restroom and other facilities, and walk indoors when necessary.

When evaluating a site’s indoor walking space, consider:

- **Space availability:** What are the hours of operation? What space will you use? When will it be available and will it be available exclusively for your group? Are there other events happening at the same time? Ideally, you will be able to identify a space that will be consistently available for use by your walking group during the times scheduled for your session.
- **Size:** Is there a large enough space to allow all the members in your group to walk indoors comfortably? An indoor gymnasium is ideal, but not all sites will have this option. Be creative! Can you identify a route through a larger building (e.g., down hallways) that will allow your walkers to get a good workout?
- **Access to restrooms and water fountains:** Identify what amenities are available and plan accordingly. If there are no drinking fountains, encourage walkers to bring their own water.
- **Accessibility:** Make sure the space is friendly and easily accessible to all walkers. You may have participants in your walking group with different abilities. Ask yourself if everyone will be able to easily access the indoor space. Are there barriers (e.g., steps, curbs) that will create challenges for some?
- **Ability to store belongings:** While walkers should be encouraged to bring only items that are necessary for walking, you will want to find out if there is an area for walkers to store coats, handbags or other items.
- **Flooring:** Some types of flooring are easier on joints than others. For example, hardwood, cork, carpeting, and linoleum are all more comfortable for walking long distances than cement. When possible, choose indoor spaces with joint-friendly floor coverings. This may be particularly important for older walkers or those with physical limitations.
- **Heating and cooling:** Access to air conditioning and indoor heating can be important for both safety and comfort, especially in parts of the country where temperatures can be very hot or very cold, and for walkers who may have health conditions affected by temperature.
Identify and engage key partners and stakeholders

Success in establishing your walking group will depend on relationships formed with others in the community. Partners and key stakeholders can play several important roles, including helping to support and spread the word about your walking group, providing space, and helping to identify sources of funding to support walking group activities.

When thinking about how to best engage partners and stakeholders, consider the following strategies:

Identify individuals and organizations in your community with an interest in supporting walking groups.

These may include community residents with an interest in promoting their own health or the health of other members of their community, or community-based organizations interested in promoting community cohesion or community life more broadly.

For example, many faith-based organizations have a strong interest in promoting health, and some have health ministries that may be enthusiastic about supporting health-enhancing opportunities for community residents. Identifying these individuals and groups, and understanding their own motivations and reasons for supporting walking groups, can help your organization work most effectively with them. Local businesses, schools and neighborhood groups such as block clubs can also be key partners, and can support your efforts in many ways.

A list of common partners and stakeholders can be found in Table 1. If your organization does not currently have relationships with some of these groups, reach out!
### Table 1: Key Partners and Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder/Partner</th>
<th>Related Interest</th>
<th>Potential Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Residents</td>
<td>• Increase opportunities for physical activity at convenient time and location</td>
<td>• Participate in walking group&lt;br&gt;• Help spread the word about walking group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community organizations, health programs, schools, and faith-based organizations</td>
<td>• Increase opportunities for physical activity&lt;br&gt;• Increase social support&lt;br&gt;• Health benefits</td>
<td>• Increase access for community residents&lt;br&gt;• Could provide home base for walking group&lt;br&gt;• May donate supplies/materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Associations</td>
<td>• Engage community residents</td>
<td>• Spread the word about walking group in the neighborhood&lt;br&gt;• Suggest good neighborhood walking routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Departments (e.g., Parks and Rec.)</td>
<td>• Increase recreational opportunities for residents</td>
<td>• Support development of maps of walking routes&lt;br&gt;• Assure routes are safe and well maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
<td>• Promote community benefits&lt;br&gt;• Can play a role in supporting the program</td>
<td>• Support the program (e.g., help identify new walking group facilitators)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Businesses</td>
<td>• Strengthen community relationships&lt;br&gt;• Promote products and services</td>
<td>• Donations to support walking groups&lt;br&gt;• Sponsor events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Media</td>
<td>• Local interest news coverage&lt;br&gt;• Health coverage</td>
<td>• Inform public about walking group and help promote it&lt;br&gt;• Public service announcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>• Improve employee health</td>
<td>• Promote the walking group program&lt;br&gt;• Offer incentives to employees for walking group participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Health Departments</td>
<td>• Improve public health</td>
<td>• Promote program&lt;br&gt;• Identify or provide group facilitators&lt;br&gt;• Provide resources (e.g., health benefits information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Providers</td>
<td>• Improve patient health&lt;br&gt;• Provide community benefits</td>
<td>• Refer patients who would benefit from walking&lt;br&gt;• Donate walking supplies (e.g., pedometers, heart rate monitors, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement Agencies</td>
<td>• Safety and protection</td>
<td>• Offer guidance on safe routes in the community&lt;br&gt;• Ensure safety along the routes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inform key partners and stakeholders about the many benefits of walking and walking groups.
Take the opportunity to educate potential partners and stakeholders about the important physical and mental health benefits of walking groups (see Toolkit #7). Providing them with this information can help to build support and enthusiasm for your program. Even more so, listening carefully to their own interests can help identify opportunities to work together to promote community health.

Work with key partners and stakeholders to identify ways that they might promote walking.
Each partner and organization will have different resources to offer walking groups. Some may be able to help spread the word through their networks, while others may be able to offer space for walking groups to meet.

Continue to develop relationships over time.
As walking groups get up and running, continue to develop and nurture relationships with key stakeholders. They can help you continue to spread the word about your walking group, identify new members, and provide many forms of support over time.
Identify and Prepare Walking Group Facilitators

Enthusiastic, well-informed and committed walking group facilitators are key to walking group success. Walk Your Heart to Health was developed and tested with Community Health Promoters - community members who are passionate about and dedicated to promoting health in their communities - as facilitators. Facilitating walking groups is fun, and facilitators play a critical role in promoting the health and well-being of the community. Facilitation also takes skill and hard work. Whether you will be the person facilitating your walking group or you will be selecting a facilitator, proper training and preparation for the role will help promote safe, enjoyable and effective walking groups.

What to look for (or develop) in a walking group facilitator

There are a number of traits and skills that can help make someone a strong walking group facilitator. If you will be facilitating your walking group, you may wish to hone the characteristics outlined in Table 2 and/or develop your skill set in these areas. If your group is planning to select a facilitator, try to identify a facilitator with the following traits and skills.

Table 2: Key characteristics & skills of walking group facilitators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Interest in health-related issues and topics.</td>
<td>• Active listening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A “people person” who enjoys working with people from different backgrounds.</td>
<td>• Able and willing to sustain physical activity for 50 minutes 3 times per week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empathetic and able to demonstrate acceptance of group members’ ideas,</td>
<td>• Creativity in engaging walking group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feelings, and capabilities.</td>
<td>• Ability to identify strengths of group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interest in helping others to be healthy.</td>
<td>• Skill in supporting group members in assuming group roles (e.g., developing co-facilitators).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong interpersonal skills.</td>
<td>• Skill in supporting others in walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flexible.</td>
<td>• Organized and able to keep on schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excellent role model.</td>
<td>• Works effectively as a member of a team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership experience.</td>
<td>• Skill in coordinating multiple people and schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-motivated, takes initiative and displays good judgment.</td>
<td>• Basic computer skills are helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Mature, responsible, reliable.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Resident of the community where the walking group will be based.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Supporting Your Walking Group Facilitator(s)

Providing financial support for those who are facilitating walking groups can be important in promoting their ongoing engagement and enthusiasm as a facilitator. This may be particularly important if you are a member of an organization that is seeking to start a walking group in a community where resources are more limited. Providing financial support for walking group facilitators is likely to benefit your walking group by reducing facilitator turnover and training costs, improving enthusiasm and communication, and enhancing group cohesion. For funding ideas, see Step 9.

If you are part of an organization that has a strong and committed volunteer network in place, you may be able to engage volunteers as facilitators or in other creative ways that will help support and sustain your walking group over time.

Regardless of whether walking group facilitators are paid or volunteer, adequate training and supervision is essential. Below are some suggestions for how to prepare facilitators for the important role they will play in your walking group program.

Facilitator Training

All walking group facilitators should be trained to develop knowledge in the following areas:

Safe walking guidelines and heart health.

The physical safety and well-being of walkers is a facilitator’s top priority. Facilitators should understand the many benefits of physical activity (see Toolkit #7) so they can share this knowledge with group members, motivate and encourage walkers to walk safely, and encourage health benefits.

While facilitators are not expected to be medical experts, it is helpful to have basic knowledge of general heart health. Topics of which facilitators will want to have a basic understanding include the basics of heart disease, stroke, cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes, and how walking may reduce these risks.

For example, facilitators should be familiar with the following:

- **Heart disease** describes a number of conditions that affect or damage the heart.
- **Coronary heart disease** is when plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries (see Image 2).
- **A heart attack** is when a clot forms that completely blocks blood flow to the heart.
- **Stroke** is when a blood vessel to the brain is blocked.

Facilitators should not feel intimidated if these areas are new to them - the information is interesting, not difficult to learn and useful.

Facilitators will also want to be aware of the potential health impacts of walking for those with chronic conditions (see Step 4). For example, they may tire more easily, have difficulty walking during periods of extreme heat or cold, or...
require longer periods to warm up or cool down. For some conditions, walking may affect medication needs (e.g., for some conditions, walking may actually reduce the amount of medication required over time). Facilitators should be aware of this and have resources available to share with group members (see Step 4). This will help walkers be alert to and monitor potential warning signs.

Walking outdoors is fun and energizing. It can also pose unique safety challenges. There are many important ways that facilitators can help ensure the safety of walkers, from paying careful attention to road signage, to carrying water, to promoting safe walking guidelines. Facilitators should understand basic safe walking guidelines (see Toolkit #8) and share these guidelines with their walking group.

Facilitators should also receive training on how to identify warning signs of a medical emergency, such as symptoms of a heart attack (see Toolkit #9-14 for health topic training materials), and how to respond in case of an emergency.

**Identifying walking routes.**

Walking group facilitators should be proficient in identifying safe and enjoyable walking routes for their team. Selecting facilitators who are also seasoned walkers and residents of the local community can help assure that they will be familiar with neighborhood safety and local walking conditions, and comfortable identifying walking routes. Steps 3 and 4 include tips for identifying safe walking routes in your community.

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**ACTIVITY: At the first meeting, consider establishing a “group agreement.” This will help foster clear expectations and communication and promote group cohesion. See Toolkit #4 for an exercise in establishing agreements for working together.**

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“The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.”

-Babe Ruth

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**Building a sense of connection among members of your walking group.**

Walking group facilitators should understand and be able to implement strategies for building group cohesion, or group unity, among program participants. Group cohesion refers to the commitment that members of a group make to each other and to the shared goal that brings them together. Members are more likely to remain part of walking groups that they feel connected to and enjoy being part of.

Building strong, cohesive groups is an important skill that walking group facilitators can develop through dedication and practice. It is important that facilitators provide continuous support to their team by being present at each session, actively engaging with participants, and creating a nurturing environment. See Toolkit #15 for more suggestions on facilitating groups.
People join walking groups for both physical activity and to engage in social interaction with other members. Promoting teamwork and relationships among participants is not only a great way to retain participants, it will also help recruit new leaders. Participants who feel a strong sense of group cohesion may begin to co-facilitate walking groups and eventually become leaders themselves.

Activities for building relationships among group members can be incorporated into walking group sessions, including the following (see Toolkit #16 for a more extensive list):

- Encourage and motivate members using positive words, active listening, and connecting.
- Reward regular and on-time attendance.
- Create a telephone tree for cancelled sessions or to follow-up when someone is missing.
- Identify different walking routes for varying ability levels.
- Assign group roles/responsibilities.
- Identify a team captain for different walking routes.
- Celebrate progress toward group goals (see Image 3 and Toolkit #3).
- Celebrate special occasions (e.g., birthdays, milestones).
- Incorporate team-building activities, such as the Buddy Game (see Toolkit #17).
Establishing routes for outdoor walking is fun and easy! There are a number of resources available to assist with this process, beginning with the community residents who become engaged as walking group facilitators and who will likely bring substantial local knowledge to this process (see Step 2).

Additional resources include:

- **Stakeholders:** Many of the stakeholders you identified in Step 1 are likely to be familiar with the neighborhoods in which your walking group will be walking. They are likely to have local knowledge about areas that are good for walking.

- **Existing local maps:** Some communities may have existing local maps that detail potential walking routes, or with local historic or other sites of interest. These can be an excellent resource as you begin to build your walking routes (see Image 4).

- **Greenways:** Some urban and rural communities are developing greenways (also known as linear parks, walking trails, rails to trails) which can make wonderful routes for walking group. Check with your local community to see if there are existing Greenways, or potentially some in the planning stage that may become available at a later date. The Dequindre Cut Greenway in Detroit (see page 22) is one such example.

Map various routes for your walks from the location you have selected as your walking group’s home base. It is helpful to offer your walking group different route options throughout your program, in order to maintain a fresh and interesting set of walking opportunities.

Online tools and Web apps such as Google Map Pedometer (www.gmap-pedometer.com) and MapMyRun (http://www.mapmyrun.com) can help you map walking routes in your neighborhood.
Test walk your selected routes

It is important to try out your walking routes in advance, before you decide to take your group there. It can take a fair amount of exploring to find a route that is the right fit (see Table 3 for things to look for on your test walks). Be sure to do your test walks during the time that you expect your walking group to meet, as conditions can vary substantially throughout the course of the day (e.g., traffic, other pedestrian use). Take a friend with you and have fun!


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Take note of how many minutes it took for you to walk this route and what was happening in your environment. The walking experience on each route can vary throughout the day. There might be a period when there is heavier car or pedestrian traffic. Make sure to test your route at the same time you plan to walk it with your group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amenities</td>
<td>Identify any potential meeting places on the route that may offer restroom facilities, water fountains or seating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Some routes may look great to walk but it is important to check for crime and traffic around the area. Ask your stakeholders and participants of any concerns with the routes you identify.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Were there any areas where visibility was limited? This may include areas where walkers are blocked from view by trees or greenery, or areas where walkers may not be visible to drivers of vehicles along roadways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkability</td>
<td>This helps you determine the features of accessibility for people with different abilities. Look out for adequate lighting, sidewalk maintenance, and traffic patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loop</td>
<td>Focus on routes that begin and end at the same place. Various “loop” lengths allow members to safely see each other, set their own pace, and easily find their way back to the start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length and degree of difficulty</td>
<td>Select walking routes with varying degrees of length and difficulty in order to accommodate all members of the group. If your group has different levels of ability, you may want to select different routes and ask a group member to co-facilitate walks for walkers with different abilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACTIVITY: “Test Walk” the route you intend to use at the time of day that your walking group plans to meet. Afterwards, answer the following questions:

- What was your experience like? What did you notice? (e.g., traffic, lighting, sidewalk conditions, dogs, general safety, pleasantness, etc.)
- How long did the walk take you to complete?
- What was the total distance you walked? If you are unsure of the distance of your route, use www.gmap-pedometer.com to track the distance. All you need is the starting point address/intersection and the end point.

Table 3: Things to look for when test walking a route
A key priority for walking groups is assuring the safety and well-being of participants. In addition to providing adequate training for walking group facilitators (see Step 2), establishing safety protocols is important to promoting safety and maximizing the health benefits of your walking program.

A protocol is a set of guidelines that provide information for how to proceed in various situations. Although walking is generally a safe and low-risk activity, there are a number of safety considerations that can be spelled out in your walking group safety protocol. These include:

**Identifying individuals with health conditions and establishing their readiness to start a walking program**

Walking is good for almost everyone, including those who have existing chronic conditions such as diabetes or hypertension. However, some participants in your walking group may not have experience being physically active, and some may have chronic conditions that are affected by physical activity.

Toolkit #18-22 contain information that may be helpful for those with existing chronic conditions as they begin a walking group program. Consider using these tools as handouts and making them available to your walkers. Familiarizing yourself and your walking group facilitator(s) with this information will help assure the safety of participants in your walking group.

You may wish to use the brief walking group health assessment provided in Toolkit #23 to help potential participants assess their readiness to engage in a walking program. Most people do not need to see a doctor before they start a walking program. However, participants should receive medical clearance to exercise from a healthcare professional if they:

- feel pain in their chest when they do physical activity
- have had chest pain when they were NOT doing physical activity in the past month
- have type I diabetes, sometimes called juvenile onset diabetes
- have been advised NOT to exercise by a doctor or healthcare professional

Medications are another important consideration among individuals with chronic conditions. For those who are currently taking medication (e.g., for high blood pressure or to control diabetes), beginning a walking program may affect their medication requirements. Please see Toolkit #18-22 for more information.

**Implementing warm up and cool down protocols**

Walking is a safe activity with relatively low risk of injury. The primary risks associated with walking involve potential strained muscles or sprains. Warming up before walking and cooling down after walking help reduce the risk of these minor injuries. Your walking group should include approximately 15 minutes to warm up and 15 minutes to cool down.
Remember that stretching should always be done after warming up, not before (see Toolkit #1).

Visibility and safety along walking routes

Ensuring that walkers are visible reduces the risk of pedestrian/automobile accidents. This is particularly important for walking groups that are walking in the evening or early morning when visibility is more limited.

Familiarize yourself with safe walking guidelines (see Toolkit #8) and consider investing in safety equipment such as reflective vests, flashlights, or bright clothing. If you do not currently have resources for this equipment, consider seeking funding (see Step 9) or encouraging your walkers to purchase safety equipment.

It can also be helpful to contact your local police precinct to let them know that you will be starting a walking group, the location of your routes, and the times that the group will be walking. A sample letter can be found in Toolkit #24.

Emergency preparations

Emergencies can happen. Being prepared can help minimize their adverse effects. Develop a protocol for walking group members to follow in case of an emergency, and make sure that facilitators are familiar with the plan. Walking group facilitators should also understand basic first aid procedures, and be supplied with a kit for handling emergencies, such as flashlights, mace, walkie-talkies or cell phones, phone lists with emergency numbers, and a phone list with group members’ numbers. If a group member faints, is injured, or experiences any other medical event, facilitators should call 911 immediately.

TIP: TO AVOID INJURY, GROUPS WILL OFTEN BEGIN BY WALKING 30 MINUTES AT EACH MEETING AND WORK UP TO A 50 MINUTE WALK. REMEMBER THAT SOME WALKING IS BETTER THAN NONE, AND THAT WALKING A LITTLE FURTHER OR FASTER OVER TIME IS AN EXCELLENT GOAL TO STRIVE FOR!

Rosedale Walking Group members wearing safety vests.
Establish a Walking Group Schedule and Format

Developing a consistent format and schedule for your walking group is important for promoting regular participation from group members. While walking groups are meant to feel fun and casual, without regular attendance it is difficult for participants to achieve their physical activity goals and to maintain enthusiasm among group members.

Groups should establish a regular and consistent meeting time and place where members will convene at least three days per week. More walking is better. Establishing clear and shared objectives for the number of walking sessions per week is important.

As part of the WYHH program, for example, group members were asked to:
- Attend 2-3 walking sessions per week (with exceptions made for vacation, illness, and/or injury).
- Wear their pedometer daily.
- Adhere to the group norms established in session 1 (see Toolkit #4).
- Wear proper footwear for walking (see Toolkit #25).
- Complete evaluation forms throughout program (see Step 9).

TIP: SETTING A REGULAR AND CONSISTENT SCHEDULE (E.G., EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY AT 5:00 P.M.) FOR YOUR WALKING GROUP WILL HELP PARTICIPANTS PLAN FOR CONSISTENT PARTICIPATION.

Developing a format for your meetings helps ensure that all planned activities will fit into the allotted time and that the program adheres to the key core components (see p. 8–9). There are various formats your walking group might take: all should include attendance, an ice-breaker, a period of physical activity, a water/food break, and a group discussion.

It is best if discussion topics are identified by group members so they are relevant and of shared interest to program participants. Examples of possible topics include: nutrition and food label reading, stress reduction, how to stay motivated, common injuries/injury prevention, current events, upcoming walking events, and “brags” (where group members share accomplishments with one another from the past week).
The WYHH program used the following format, which you may wish to replicate or adapt for your own walking group:

- Sign-in/attendance (see Toolkit #30)
- Download steps (optional: if tracking via pedometer/Fitbit)
- Norm-setting activity (week 1 only)
  (see Toolkit #4)
- Ice-breaker activity (see Toolkit #26)
- Warm up/stretching (see Toolkit #1)
- Walking (or other activity)
- Cool down/stretching (see Toolkit #1)
- Water/food break
- Group discussion
- Review of key points from discussion
- Closing
- Evaluation (see Toolkit #30-34)

TIP: CONSIDER OFFERING ALTERNATIVES TO WALKING AT SOME SESSIONS TO KEEP THINGS FRESH AND FUN. EASY, SAFE OPTIONS INCLUDE GENTLE STRETCHING OR YOGA, JUMPING JACKS, CLIMBING STAIRS, OR DANCING.

SEE RESOURCES (P. 86) FOR MORE IDEAS.
Create a Process for Registering or Joining Your Group

Establishing a registration process for your walking group serves several purposes. First, it can provide basic information about walking group participants, such as name, contact information, and emergency contacts. Second, it offers an opportunity to learn about participants and provide them with relevant information. For example, through a registration process you can find out if participants have a chronic condition and offer them information on what to expect as they begin a walking program (see Toolkit #18-22). Finally, registration can help you manage the total number of participants in your group, for example to assure that your indoor space can accommodate the number of participants.

Registration forms can include the following information (see Image 5 for a sample form):

- Name
- Birthdate
- Telephone number, email address, and other contact information
- Days and times interested in walking (unless you have already specified)
- Where to return the form (e.g., email or in-person)
- Optional: Registration forms may also direct people to resources where they can learn more specific information about walking, such as information about beginning a walking program for people with diabetes.

**WALKING GROUP REGISTRATION FORM**

*Would you like to join a fun, new walking group starting in your neighborhood?*

Please take a few minutes to fill out this form. Your answers are needed to help us plan the walking group.

Name__________________________ Age______________

Phone number__________________

What day of the week would be best for you? (circle answer)

*Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday*

What time of day would be best for you? (circle answer)

*Morning Afternoon Evening*

*Image 5: Sample registration form*
Some organizations require walkers to sign a liability waiver before starting. A sample liability waiver form can be found in Toolkit #27.

Also consider whether you would like to invite your participants to complete a brief health assessment regarding readiness for physical activity as part of the registration process (see Toolkit #23). Individuals can complete this form on their own, and return it to you when they send in their registration form. This is an opportunity for you to learn more about walkers’ health status and raise awareness among participants about their health and any potential changes they may need to make as they begin a walking program (e.g., changes to medication regimens or dosages).
Once the walking group schedule, meeting format, meeting location, and route(s) are finalized, walking group facilitators are prepared, and registration materials are ready, it is time to let people know about your walking group!

The methods you choose to advertise your walking group will depend on how broadly you want to spread the word, as well as your intended audience (see Step 1). Below are some options and considerations.

**Flyers and posters**

Visual materials are an excellent way to raise awareness about your walking group. They can be printed and posted around the community and/or sent electronically to those with access to email, text or Facebook. The method you select will likely depend on your budget and the communication channels preferred by the audience you wish to reach.

Be sure to include the following information on your flyer:
- Where the walking group will meet
- Days and times (unless this will be determined at a later date based on availability indicated on the registration form)
- Contact number/email for more information and/or to register for program
- List of proper attire for walking (see Toolkit #25)
- Benefits of walking (see Toolkit #7)

Distribute your flyer at locations frequented by those you wish to reach with your walking group. Make sure to advertise with places in the community you consider stakeholders or partners. You may consider posting flyers or posters at some of the following locations:
- Faith and community-based organizations
- Schools
- Senior centers
- Libraries
- Supermarkets
- Healthcare centers
- Fitness centers
- Pharmacies
- Places around your walking routes, such as residences or local businesses

**TIP: KEEP FLYERS EASY TO READ, TO THE POINT, AND VISUALLY APPEALING! PEOPLE ARE BUSY AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR WALKING GROUP RIGHT AWAY. CONSIDER INCLUDING TEAR-OFF TABS AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR FLYER SO PEOPLE CAN TAKE INFORMATION HOME WITH THEM.**
**ACTIVITY:** Spend a few minutes taking a look at the sample flyer in Image 6. What works and doesn’t work? How would you tailor it to attract your audience?

**Talk to people!**

Make announcements about your walking group at community meetings, events, and services you attend. Spread the word about your walking group to friends, family, and people you know at places you go, and encourage your group members to do the same. Walking group facilitators, as trusted community members, can also play an important role in identifying program participants. Consider making announcements, or simply chatting with people about your walking group at church, work, your child’s school or daycare, PTA meetings, and places you engage in physical activity (e.g., recreation centers).

**Using social media**

If the community members you are trying to reach use social media for communication, consider setting up a Facebook page or twitter account for your walking group and advertising that way. If you have access to email addresses, consider using free email software (e.g., Mailchimp - www.mailchimp.com) to attract participants via email blasts.

**Host a “kick-off” event**

A kick-off walking event can be a great way to create visibility and spread awareness about walking in general, and about your new walking program. You can also use the event to register participants, or simply publicize your new walking group.

Select a central route in the community for the kick-off event. Make sure the route is not too long, as you may have individuals who are not used to walking long distances – 20-25 minutes may be a good distance for this initial walk. Alternatively, your route may offer options, with a shorter route for slower or less experienced walkers and a longer route to challenge more active participants.

Invite stakeholders and others who have been involved throughout the planning process. This can be an opportunity to publicly acknowledge their contributions, and to invite them to join the fun! Use the opportunity to ask guests for their input on the program. Let them know their feedback is welcome, and that you will use it to refine the program.
Kick Off Your Walking Group

Your first walking group session should be organized, informative and fun! This is when you are introducing your group members to one another and to the new walking group, and a positive first impression is important. Be prepared with relevant materials and handouts, start and end the session on time, and provide a warm and welcoming environment for walking group participants.

Remember that you will want to be sure you have secured funding and developed your evaluation plan prior to beginning your walking group! (see Step 9).

The first walking group session is also a great time to continue registering new members. Registration is an ongoing process, with new members joining throughout the year. Below are some suggestions for assuring a smooth and organized first walking session, and for getting off to a great start!

Prepare welcome kits

Welcome kits can be distributed to participants on an ongoing basis as they register, or at the first walking session. Some ideas for materials to include in the kits include:

- The walking group schedule and location (dates and times, including any breaks for holidays)
- Tips for dressing appropriately and what to eat for walking (see Toolkit #25)
- Tips for walking safely (see Toolkit #8)

- Handout on benefits of walking (see Toolkit #7)
- Handouts on walking with chronic conditions, if relevant (e.g., if your group includes individuals with diabetes or arthritis) (see Toolkit #18-22)
- Small gifts (e.g., water bottles, t-shirts)

Create a schedule for the session and stick with it!

The first meeting is the time to share the final walking schedule with your participants, and inform them that the walking group will meet at the same time and location each session. Make sure participants understand how changes to the schedule will be communicated, and the contingency plan if weather is bad. Be sure to stick with the schedule you lay out.
Other tips for a successful start

At the first meeting, group members should feel assured that they will have the opportunity to both get exercise and meet new friends. Additional suggestions for the first session include:

- Plan some time at the beginning for new members to complete registration forms.
- Provide participants with welcome kits (see p. 31) and other relevant handouts.
- Review the plan for the session at the beginning and include time to answer questions.
- Make people feel welcome (e.g., do a fun ice-breaker activity to help people get to know each other - see Toolkit #26).
- Stay on schedule!
- Do a brief warm up activity (see Toolkit #1).
- Walk for 30-35 minutes at the first session (you can plan to increase the duration at later sessions).
- Remember to plan your route and walk it in advance so you know what to expect!
- Do a cool down activity (see Toolkit #1).
- Close by once again welcoming people to the group and reminding them of the next session.
Although presented toward the end of this manual, work on evaluating and financing your walking group will actually begin **before** you start your walking program. Evaluation is how you can know if your walking group is meeting your goals and objectives, and those of the members of the group. Establishing a clear understanding of your goals and objectives (see Step 1) will help you think about what it is that you want to evaluate, and be prepared to measure progress toward goals on day one!

**Evaluating your walking group**

Evaluation is a process that allows you to gather and use data to help determine whether or not your walking program is going well and is having the desired effect. Evaluation provides you with valuable information that you can use to make improvements to your program. It can also help you secure funding to support future programs.

**Why evaluate?**

Through evaluation, you can learn how much participants liked a program, what worked and didn’t work, and if your walking group has had a positive impact on participants. If you are planning to seek funding for your program (see p. 35), evaluation may be especially important. Funders may request an evaluation “plan” as part of a grant application and will often want to see the results to assess if it has been effective. It will be easier to apply for and secure continued funding if you have some basic evidence of your program’s effectiveness.

**When should I evaluate?**

You should develop an evaluation plan prior to beginning your walking program. Typically, participants will complete measures (see below) before they start walking, throughout the walking program, and once the program is complete.

**What should I evaluate?**

Evaluation does not have to be complicated or cumbersome! In fact, the most important areas of evaluation are also relatively simple.

Consider tracking the following:

- **Attendance:** Tracking attendance (see Toolkit #30) tells you the most basic information about your program, such as how many people came to each session and if you retained participants over time. If people miss sessions, you may want to follow up to understand why. Attendance information may also help you understand the changes (or lack thereof) in the physical activity levels of your participants.

- **Participant satisfaction:** Tracking participant satisfaction and feedback (see Toolkit #31-32) helps you understand what is working and not working about your program. It helps you make major improvements to your program overall, or small adjustments along the way to make the walking group more enjoyable for members. Asking for (and incorporating!) feedback is an excellent way to engage your team members and show them that their opinions are valued.
• **Physical activity:** Tracking physical activity (see Toolkit #33) is a great way to document the effectiveness of your program. This can be as simple as wearing a pedometer, using a mobile app, or writing down how long you walked on a given day. This information can be useful when approaching funders for resources (e.g., money or supplies) to support your program. Funders want to see that your program works!

**TIP: TRACKING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS USING A CALENDAR! ASK PARTICIPANTS TO SIMPLY WRITE DOWN THE DAYS THEY WALKED, FOR HOW LONG, AND HOW THEY FELT AFTER.**

Tracking walking group members’ progress also allows you to provide each group member with valuable feedback. Regular feedback is a useful tool for keeping walkers motivated as they work toward their goals. For example, showing walkers how much they have increased the number of steps they are taking each day, or the length of their walks, is a great way to demonstrate improvement.

When giving feedback, take the opportunity to encourage or congratulate group members on their success. Be sure to also recognize walkers who have gone out of their way to support or motivate other team members, those who have shown the most improvement, and those who have demonstrated their commitment to their health and the health of their communities.

Also consider completing a session summary (see Toolkit #34) at the end of each session so you have a record of what happened each week (e.g., weather, discussion topic, walking route). Evaluation forms used by the WYHH program can be found in Toolkit #30-34.

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**Financial considerations**

Prior to beginning your walking program, you will want to develop a budget, or cost estimate, for your program. The cost of your walking group will depend on a number of factors, including funds to support the walking group facilitator, the number of participants, which elements are included (see list below), and any costs associated with space (e.g., rental fees, staff).

Some common elements used to support walking groups include:

- Walking group facilitator/coordinator stipend or salary.
- Walking group safety supplies, such as:
  - Reflective vests
  - Fanny packs to carry group supplies on walks
  - Mace
- Pedometers, Fitbits, or other device for tracking steps.
- Reusable water bottles and/or t-shirts with group name.
- Celebrations.
- DVDs, mats, or other supplies for indoor physical activity.
- Printing costs.
- Food/beverages provided at walking sessions.

See Toolkit #28 for more information on material and financial resources and considerations.
Funding your walking group

If your organization has not yet identified a source of funding for your program, or if your existing budget does not cover the total projected cost of the program, have no fear! There are a number of ways to raise the money needed to support your walking group.

Information on grants, donations, corporate sponsorships, in-kind gifts and crowdfunding are presented below. For additional strategies and ideas for funding community walking groups, see Resources (p. 88).

Grants

A grant from a governmental entity, foundation or other organization to a non-profit (or other eligible recipient) may help support your walking group. Funders typically release a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) that provides information about the types of projects they will fund, as well as application details and deadlines. Organizations seeking funding develop and submit their proposals, or applications, describing their project plan and budget, and how it aligns with the funder’s goals.

If you are an individual or organization that is new to grant writing or would like some additional training and support, see Resources (p. 88) for links to recommended readings on writing effective grants.

When searching for grants that are a good fit for your program, identify funders who support community physical activity programs in your locality and who fund your type of need (e.g., equipment purchases, capacity building/training, general operating expenses, etc.). See Resources (p. 86) for a list of directories of available grants to help you get started. You may also wish to take a look at the resources provided by your state, county or city, as they often provide funding opportunities and potential partners for individuals and nonprofits.

Donations

Donations from individuals or corporations are gifts to your walking group. Some donors will have a specific idea about how they want these funds to be used, while others will leave it up to you to decide. You are not obliged to accept a donation - if a donor asks that their donation be used for a specific purpose that is not aligned with your goals or the mission of your group, feel free to (graciously) decline that offer.

When thinking about who to ask for donations, consider the following:

• Ask people/organizations you know and have existing relationships with (use your connections!)
• Ask in a variety of ways (e.g., mailings, social media, email, in-person meetings)
• Involve your volunteers and/or community partners (ask other people to ask!)

Remember that you are accountable to your donors. You should provide donors with a timely thank-you letter that acknowledges their gift and relevant tax information (see Toolkit #29) within one week of receiving the donation. And you should always use donated funds in a way that is aligned with donor’s wishes, as it fits into your goals.
Corporate sponsorships
Corporations may consider providing financial support to your walking group in exchange for free advertising and publicity. For example, at your kick-off event corporate sponsors may have their logo prominently featured on a banner and a booth where they can distribute materials about their products. They may also wish to have their logo displayed on your team’s water bottles or t-shirts.

TIP: ALWAYS THANK AND ACKNOWLEDGE SPONSORS IN ANY PUBLICLY DISTRIBUTED MATERIALS (E.G., ADVERTISEMENTS, EVENT INVITATIONS) ABOUT YOUR WALKING GROUP, AND INCLUDE THEIR LOGO.

Consider asking local businesses such as community hospitals, banks or grocery stores to sponsor your walking group. Perhaps you are already friendly with individuals who work at some of these institutions in your community. If so, start there! If not, begin to cultivate these relationships (See Step 1 on identifying stakeholders). And remember that corporations choose to sponsor not only out of the goodness of their hearts, but because of the positive attention it will bring to their organization. So talk with them about what they want to get out of their sponsorship!

In-kind gifts
In-kind contributions are goods or services provided to your walking group free of charge. They are considered “income” because they are items you would have spent money on had they not been donated. Therefore, you will want to account for in-kind gifts in your budget.

For your walking group, you may wish to solicit in-kind donations for refreshments such as bottled water and snacks, or fitness items such as water bottles, t-shirts or sweat bands. In-kind gifts can also include donated services. If you know a yoga teacher, nutritionist, or other health or fitness professional in your community, consider asking them to offer a free class or consultation for your group!

Crowdfunding
Crowdfunding is a newer fundraising strategy that uses social media to raise funds through many small online donations. This is a way to raise money from people you know and people you don’t know. Individuals or organizations seeking funding identify a fundraising goal and create a Web platform where they present and market their idea to potential donors. In some cases, projects are not funded unless the total fundraising goal is met.

There are a number of websites dedicated specifically to crowdfunding, such as GoFundMe, Kickstarter and Indiegogo. Be aware that some crowdfunding platforms have fees associated with them. Alternatively, you can develop a Facebook page for your walking group and solicit funds that way.

TIP: IF YOU ARE AN ESTABLISHED NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, YOU CAN ADD A “DONATE” BUTTON TO YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE - JUST MAKE SURE DONORS KNOW THAT FUNDS WILL GO TO SUPPORT YOUR ORGANIZATION’S WALKING GROUP!

For more information on fundraising, see Resources (p. 88).
Congratulations on successfully developing and kicking off your new walking group! Give yourself credit for the hard work it took to identify the best walking routes in your community, train your walking group facilitators and recruit participants. Now that your group is “up and walking,” it is time to think about how you will sustain your walking group over time. While this can sometimes happen naturally (for example, in groups where walkers are family members or good friends), like most things in life, your walking group is more likely to remain vibrant and active with a little TLC!

Promoting strong relationships and a sense of group cohesion among your program participants (see Step 2) is important and will pay off in maintaining your group over time. When walking group participants feel connected to one another, they are more likely to want to keep walking together. Walking group organizers and facilitators can create a space in which relationships between group members can flourish by incorporating team-building activities into walking group sessions.

Other tips for maintaining your walking group include:

**Identify a team captain for different walking routes.**

Once your group’s walking routes have been established, ask for volunteers to serve as route “captain.” Develop a set of special responsibilities for captains (e.g., leading warm-up/cool-down, walking in front, and/or leading the group in setting a goal for the day), and consider rotating every few months so different team members get a chance to lead. This creates a sense of shared ownership among group members that will encourage ongoing participation.

**Share group facilitation responsibilities.**

Once your walking group is established, consider distributing roles and responsibilities across different team members (with supervision from the facilitator). Taking attendance, set-up/clean-up, leading a group discussion, and doing reminder calls are all responsibilities that can be shared. Be sure to rotate roles every few months so team members do not get bored. When group members have an assigned role they are more likely to feel accountable to one another - and to the walking group!

**Expect some turnover in participants, and plan accordingly.**

Do not be discouraged if you lose a few participants here or there. Establishing and maintaining cohesive walking groups is an ongoing process - as some people fall off, new ones will join. Continue to publicize your walking group and recruit new participants on an ongoing basis.

**Keep your group informed.**

Make sure to stay up to date on charity walks and other walking-related events happening in your community, and share this information regularly with your group members.
You want participants to feel they are “in the know,” and what better way to learn about walking events than from their walking group? This helps participants feel valued and included. Keep an eye out for: American Heart Association Heart Walk, Cancer Walks, AIDS Walk, and Local Greenway Walks. See https://www.active.com/walking for a full list of events in your community!

Support your walking group facilitator.
Facilitating a walking group takes time, commitment and ongoing attention. Be sure to support your walking group facilitator(s). Providing financial resources (salary or stipend) can help to sustain your facilitator’s energy and enthusiasm, as well as their ability to remain engaged in your walking group. Offering opportunities for ongoing training, skill building and other forms of development can also be critical in helping your facilitator continue to learn and grow. Recognize the key role that facilitators make in supporting a successful walking group, and continue to invest in them!
Walk Your Heart to Health™ Toolkit: Table of Contents

1 Physical Activity Tips ......................................................... 41
2 Goal-Setting Overview ..................................................... 43
3 Setting Group Goals .......................................................... 45
4 Establishing Group Agreements ........................................... 46
5 Walking on Cold Days ...................................................... 47
6 Walking on Hot Days ......................................................... 49
7 Benefits of Walking .......................................................... 50
8 Safe Walking Guidelines ................................................... 51

Facilitator Training Materials
9 Cardiovascular Disease ....................................................... 53
10 Heart Attack ................................................................. 54
11 Stroke ........................................................................... 55
12 Cholesterol ................................................................. 56
13 Blood Pressure ............................................................. 57
14 Diabetes ........................................................................ 58
15 General Suggestions for Group Facilitators ..................... 59
16 Group Cohesion Strategies .............................................. 61
17 Buddy Game Activity ....................................................... 62

Handouts on Health Tips for Participants with Chronic Conditions
18 Cholesterol ................................................................. 64
19 Hypertension ............................................................... 65
20 Diabetes ....................................................................... 67
21 Arthritis ..................................................................... 70
22 Heart Disease ............................................................... 71

Resources for Facilitators
23 Walking Group Health Assessment .................................. 74
24 Police Precinct Letter ....................................................... 75
25 Dressing and Eating Right for Walking ......................... 76
26 Icebreakers ................................................................ 77
27 Liability Waiver ............................................................ 78
28 Determining Your Needs: Material and Financial Resources ..79
29 Donor Acknowledgement Letter ..................................... 80

Evaluation Forms
30 Sign-In Sheet ............................................................... 82
31 Participant Satisfaction Form ........................................... 83
32 Participant Feedback Form .............................................. 84
33 Physical Activity Log ....................................................... 85
34 Session Summary Form .................................................. 86
Physical Activity Tips

Warm up and cool down

Warming up and cooling down each time you exercise can prevent strained muscles and reduce soreness. Warm-up and cool-down should be about 15 minutes each, and can include gentle stretching.

Remember that:
• A warm-up should slowly elevate your heart rate and circulation, leading to increased body temperature, blood flow, and range of motion of muscles.
• Spend about 15 minutes gently warming your muscles. You can go for a short walk, walk in place, climb up and down stairs, walk around the room, or step side to side. You can also do some light stretches after warming up.
• To reduce stress on your heart and muscles, end each walking session by walking slowly for about 15 minutes. This allows your heartbeat to slowly return to normal. You can also do some light stretches as part of your cool-down routine.

Stretching

Stretching helps to improve flexibility, which helps to keep your muscles relaxed and your joints limber. This helps you move, reach, and bend. Lack of flexibility can be a cause of lower back pain, stiffness, and poor posture.

After warming up, aim to stretch your muscles for about five minutes. Hold stretches for 30 - 60 seconds, and be careful not to strain your back. See stretching exercises on the next page. You can also stretch as part of your cool-down routine.
Stretching Exercises

Do these stretches gently and slowly. Do not bounce.

1. Deep breathing
   Arms up, breathe in, arms down, breathe out. Two times each.

2. Neck Stretching
   Side to side, front to back. Two times in each direction.

3. Shoulder Stretches
   Up and down five times on each side.

4. Side Stretches
   Up and down five times in each direction.

5. Waist Stretches
   Side to side three times in each direction.

6. Twists
   Side to side three times in each direction.

7. Back and Leg Stretches
   Down and up five times.

8. Back Stretch
   Arms through legs six times.

9. Leg Stretch (1)
   Hold on to ankle, four times on each side.

10. Leg Stretch (2)
    Down and up five times.

11. Leg Stretch (3)
    Move heels up and down six times.

Source: Developed by the California Diabetes Control Program, Department of Health Services, CA
Goal Setting Overview

What are goals and why set them?

Goals are guides for action. They direct, channel, and shape what you achieve. They can be an important source of motivation, effort, concentration, and persistence. Goals provide a reference point to assess your progress. They are inspiring and can be personal or goals that you set with others.

How to set appropriate goals

- Envision an endpoint that you want to achieve from being a part of the walking group. Create short-term and long-term goals toward your vision. Goals should be clear and should be things you are able to attain.
- Use “START” criteria to define goals that are: Specific, Trackable, Attainable, Relevant, and Transferable (that is, aimed at skills you can use in multiple situations).
- Goals should be GRADUAL, HEALTHY and REASONABLE. Aim for goals that are difficult but not impossible.
- Once you have identified your goals, set a timeline and put them into action!

Monitoring, updating, and achieving your goals

- Review your progress weekly. You may start with a goal and then realize it is too easy or too challenging. That’s OK! You can always revise your goals downward or upward if needed.
- Reward yourself for your effort. Find personal satisfaction in your accomplishments and give yourself a small reward to symbolize your achievement.
- The most important thing is that you commit to your goals. The more committed you are, the more likely you are to achieve what you set out to do.

Tips for meeting your goals

- If you are unsure what a realistic goal would be, try setting an upper and lower limit for your goals (for example, “walk between 30 and 40 minutes, between 5 and 6 days per week”). Once you have a better understanding of the task and your capabilities, remove the limits.
- Remember that even small improvements are better than no improvements.
- Focus on things you can change and do not let things that are out of your control distract you from achieving your goals.
- Help others achieve their goals by encouraging their efforts. They may do the same for you in return.

Examples of walking goals

There are lots of goals you can set for yourself. Here are a few examples that can be tracked easily using your pedometer/Fitbit, mobile app, or simply on paper:
- STEPS: “My daily goal is 6,000 steps.”
- AEROBIC STEPS (brisk walking that is fast enough to make your pulse and breathing increase): “I will take 3,000 aerobic steps every day.”
- TIME SPENT WALKING AEROBICALLY: “I will spend 30 minutes every day walking aerobically.”
- DISTANCE: “I will walk at least one mile every day.”

## Setting and Tracking Goals

Name: ___________________________________________________

Write the goals you hope to achieve each week. Change your goals upward or downward to meet the reality of your situation. You can fill in all or just one of the categories below. You can also use this worksheet to track how much you walked each week, and compare it to your goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Aerobic Steps</th>
<th>Aerobic Walking Time (minutes)</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Distance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week of:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Setting Group Goals

Setting goals as a group helps promote group connectedness and is also motivating for walkers. For example: “Together, we as a group will walk a total of 150,000 steps by the end of eight weeks.”

Group goals are a great way to support your team and encourage everyone to contribute to a larger goal. Group members can encourage each other, and may set up friendly competitions to see who can contribute the most, improve the most, motivate others the most, etc. - there are many possibilities!

These goals can be set together by the group, and like your individual goals can be adjusted over time. For example, the group may find that they reach 150,000 steps altogether after four weeks, and can set a new group goal to continue to challenge themselves.

As with individual goals, set group goals that are attainable, that can be monitored over time, and that challenge the group to continue to work together toward their objectives. As with the individual goals, remember to reward yourselves as you make progress - for example, groups who reach their goal may decide to take a walk in a new and fun location as a reward.

Be creative and have fun!

For example...

A group of 10 walkers sets a goal of taking 12,000,000 steps collectively over the next six months. This is an average of 50,000 steps per person per week, or about 7,000 steps per day for each group member. Each week, the group colors in the thermometer with the total number of steps they have taken (added together) to chart progress toward their group goal. This is a fun way for groups to track their collective progress and stay motivated!
Establishing Group Agreements for Working Together

This exercise can help your group:

1. Work together effectively
2. Establish shared expectations for members
3. Communicate effectively

Directions:

Ask each group member to take about 5-10 minutes and think about groups in which you have been a member that have been positive experiences—groups in which you enjoyed participating. Consider these groups and write down three to five factors that contributed to this being a positive experience. For example: what was it about the group that made it successful? If you have not had any such experiences working with groups, then think about groups in which you were a member that you didn’t think were effective and consider three to five things that may have been missing in order for the group to be one that you enjoyed being part of.

- Each group member should use a piece of paper and pencil to jot down ideas.
- Once each member of the group has written down their ideas, spend a few minutes inviting them to share, with each person sharing one idea until everyone has had a chance to contribute and all have shared the ideas that they jotted down.
- The facilitator can write these down on a piece of newsprint as they are shared, so all can see them.
- Once the group has shared all of their ideas, the walking group facilitator can ask if there are any items that need clarification or discussion. Then the group can decide if they want to adapt these items as “group norms” guiding how members of the walking group will interact with each other. There may be minor amendments or clarifications as the group discusses this, and the group may decide to make some amendments over time.
Weather Considerations: Walking on Cold Days

1. Wear layers

- **Base layer**: Your base layer should be worn next to the skin. It will wick sweat away from your body and keep your skin dry. Consider long underwear pieces made from fabrics such as Thermion, polypropylene, Thermax, Thinsulate, or silk. Avoid cotton which tends to hold moisture next to your skin.
- **Insulating layer**: This layer will keep you warm and can be shed once you warm up. It can be a layer made of wool, fleece, or pile, a down jacket, or a shirt or vest that can be added or removed.
- **Windproof/water-resistant outer layer**: To protect you from the elements, a windproof and water resistant jacket, preferably with a hood, is useful. It should be worn loosely. Jackets that “breathe” to allow moisture from your body (sweat!) to escape are especially good.
- **Pants**: If the weather is frigid, long underwear bottoms or tights underneath another pair of pants will help keep you warm. Running pants or running tights made of synthetics are good for the inner later, while windproof materials are good for the outer layer when it is very cold.
- Consider bringing a change of clothes on your walks, in case your clothing gets wet.

2. Use accessories wisely

- **Hat**: A hat will keep your body heat from escaping, and waterproof hats can help shed rain. A polar fleece hat with ear covering is ideal. For those whose ears get particularly cold, ear bands may be helpful.
- **Gloves/mittens**: Mittens will keep your hands the warmest as the fingers work together to build up warmth. Look for windproof or wool mittens.
- **Water bottle**: You need water in winter as much as in summer. Bring water since drinking fountains may be turned off.
- **Scarf, neck gaiter, or ski mask**: Having something to wrap around your neck on windy days will make you more comfortable and preserve your body heat.
- **Sunscreen and lip protector**: The earth is closer to the sun in December - February, so be sure to protect your skin and lips from getting chapped.
- **Umbrella**: Bring a lightweight, collapsible umbrella to keep you dry.
3. Keep your feet happy

- **Waterproof shoes/boots:** If you plan to walk outside in the winter you may wish to invest in a pair of waterproof shoes. Many companies have lightweight styles. Coating shoes with a water repellent fabric treatment is another option.
- **Traction:** Don’t wear slick soled shoes if there will be wet or snowy pavement. For icy conditions, consider Stabilicers, YakTrax or Ice Walker slip-on cleats.
- **Socks:** Switch to heavier socks or wear two pairs for more insulation. Test your socks with your chosen shoes to make sure there is still room for your toes to wiggle.

4. Smart planning for a cold weather walk

- **Start your walk into the wind:** Finish with the wind at your back.
- **Sheltered routes:** Select routes sheltered from the wind when possible and plan for refuge along the way - is there a store, park restroom, or other place you can duck in to warm up?
- **Preventing slips:** Select routes that are clear of snow/ice or do not have standing puddles or mud.
- **Beware of cars:** Use caution when walking on roads. Cars may have more difficulty seeing you in rain or snow, and maneuvering around you in slippery conditions.
- **Use a running track:** Check the local tracks to see if they may be a good outdoor or indoor alternative to the sidewalks or streets in poor weather.
- **Use a walking stick or ski poles for extra stability when walking in icy or snowy weather.**
Weather Considerations: Walking on Hot Days

1. **Time of day:** During hot weather, try to schedule your walks during the cooler and less humid parts of the day (early morning or evening). Avoid the period between 10am and 2pm when the sun’s rays are the most powerful.

2. **Shade:** Look for routes with shade on hot days, such as parks, forest areas, or tree lined streets. If the day is breezy, try to start your walk with the breeze at your back, so when you are hot and sweaty you can turn and walk back into the breeze.

3. **Water:** Always keep yourself hydrated. Drink two to three cups of water 10 to 20 minutes before you start walking. During the walk, drink one cup every 20-30 minutes. Do not wait until you’re thirsty to drink because at that point you are probably dehydrated. Try sports drinks if you can’t get yourself to drink more water - they taste good, supply fewer calories than some other options, and get absorbed quickly into your bloodstream.

4. **Cover your head:** In the summer and on hot days try to keep your head covered. The head is usually the first part of the body that is struck by the sun. Wearing a breathable hat will help control your body temperature when you walk. A lightweight or light colored cap is a good option. When it is very hot, you can soak the hat in water before your walk to keep even cooler.

5. **Reduce friction:** Heat and sweat may make your skin under your underarms, between your toes, chest, crotch and thighs get chafed. You can reduce friction by applying a small amount of petroleum jelly or use specialized non chafing products like Runner’s Lube or Body Glide which can be found at many sporting goods stores or pharmacies. You can also wear spandex or bike style shorts under a pair of looser shorts to prevent chafing between thighs and crotch.

6. **Clothes:** In hot, humid weather, wear light, loose fitting clothing made of breathable fabrics that will allow sweat to evaporate (for example, cotton). Never wear rubberized or plastic suits – they can cause dangerously high body temperatures. Light colored clothing will reflect the sun’s rays. Consider wearing ventilated walking shoes and socks that wick sweat away. Try a wet rag on your neck which will cool your body and can feel great in the heat.

7. **Sunscreen:** Be sure to protect your skin from the sun’s burning rays by applying sunscreen of at least SPF 15. If you sweat a lot try to get waterproof sunscreen, or reapply often.

8. **Listen to your body:** Be sure to listen to your body. You may want to slow down your pace and intensity or walk a shorter route on really hot days. Give your body time to adjust to the heat. Watch for any dizziness, nausea or chills - these can be signs that you are very dehydrated or are having a heat stroke.
Benefits of Walking

Studies show that physical activity is essential for healthy living. To improve overall cardiovascular health, the American Heart Association suggests at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise. That can be a minimum of 30 minutes per day five times per week, or 50 minutes per day three times per week. Less active people can improve their health and well-being by becoming a little more active on a regular basis. Walking is a gentle, low-impact exercise. It's one of your body's most natural forms of exercise. It's safe, simple and doesn’t require a lot of practice, and has many health benefits!

Physical health benefits of walking

- **Reduces your risk for heart attack.** Walking keeps your heart healthy by lowering low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the “bad” kind) and raising high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the “good” kind).
- **Manages your blood pressure.** A regular walking program also reduces your risk of developing high blood pressure, a factor that contributes to heart disease. If you already have high blood pressure, walking can help reduce it.
- **Reduces your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.** If you’re overweight or at a high risk of diabetes, walking can improve your body’s ability to process sugar (glucose intolerance).
- **Manages your diabetes.** If you already have type 2 diabetes, walking can improve your body’s ability to process sugar, lower your blood sugar, and reduce your risk of heart disease.
- **Manages your weight.** Walking burns calories, which can help maintain a healthy weight.
- **Strengthens your lungs** and helps them to work more efficiently.
- **Tones and strengthens** your muscles.
- **Keeps your joints in good condition,** and may slow bone loss.
- **Builds stamina** and improves balance.
- **Decreases the natural effects of aging,** such as loss of balance, muscle mass, and strength.
- Walking may help to prevent cancers of the breast, uterus, and colon.

Mental health benefits of walking

- Helps manage stress and boosts your spirits.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.
- Increases energy.
- Builds confidence.
- Allows you to fall asleep more quickly and sleep more soundly.
- Helps you beat the blues.
- Provides an enjoyable way to share time with friends or family.
- Offers a way to meet new friends who can provide social support.
Safe Walking Guidelines

Safe walking tips

Consider the following tips for walking outdoors, which will help assure the safety and well-being of your walking group:

When walking, be sure to:
• Walk facing traffic.
• Carry a cell phone.
• Take any necessary medications prior to walking: When necessary, bring medications with you.
• Carry water at all times and consider carrying small snacks.
• If your group includes faster and slower walkers who may spread out, consider asking multiple group members to carry cell phones to maintain communication.
• Provide each group member with a list of phone numbers for all members of the group, including that of the facilitator.
• Supplies that can help assure that walkers are visible include: reflective vests, flashlights, and bright clothing.
• Only cross the street at a crosswalk.
• Pay careful attention to road signs and cars around you. Don’t assume that cars will stop when they should.
• Follow traffic signals, and don’t cross the street unless the sign says “walk.”
• If walking at night, wear bright, reflective clothing, and be sure not to walk alone.

Walk this way!

Use proper technique to avoid injury and setback. Walking is a great exercise because it’s so simple to do. But if your posture is poor or your movements exaggerated, you increase your risk of injury.

When walking, be sure to:
• Walk with your chin up and your shoulders held down and back, rather than rounded.
• Walk so that the heel of your foot touches the ground first, then roll your weight forward to the ball of your foot.
• Walk with your toes pointed forward.
• Swing your arms as you walk, but do not allow your arms to cross over the centerline of your body.
Health Topic Facilitator Training

What you need to know about cardiovascular disease

Cardiovascular (heart) disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S.

The term **cardiovascular disease** is used by doctors and healthcare professionals to describe a number of diseases and conditions that affect the heart.

The condition that leads to heart attack is called **coronary heart disease**. When a waxy substance called plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries you may have coronary heart disease. These arteries supply oxygen rich blood to your heart.

If the blood flow is unable to meet the needs of the heart, people generally feel chest pain or a dull ache radiating up into their neck, jaw, left shoulder or arm.

When a clot completely blocks the vessel, this is called a **heart attack**.

**Heart disease** is a condition that affects or damages the heart.

Health Topic Facilitator Training

What you need to know about symptoms of a heart attack

When a clot completely blocks a vessel in the heart, the result is a heart attack.

Symptoms of a heart attack include:
- Pressure, fullness, discomfort or squeezing in the center of the chest.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Nausea, vomiting, or severe indigestion.
- Sensation of panic and feeling impending doom.
- Breaking out in a sweat for no apparent reason.
- Dizziness with weakness.
- Suddenly being overcome with extreme fatigue.
- Pounding heart beats or feeling extra beats.
- Indigestion.

Women may experience different symptoms of a heart attack than men.

For example, women may feel:
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort.
- Nausea/vomiting.
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

If someone is having symptoms of a heart attack CALL 911!

Sources:
A stroke happens when a blood vessel to the brain becomes blocked by plaque or a clot, or when the vessel bursts open and blood can no longer reach the brain.

The term cerebrovascular refers to stroke and other diseases that affect the brain.

Many of the risk factors for stroke are the same as those for cardiovascular disease.

There are three conditions that lead to cardiovascular disease and stroke. They are:
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes

Stroke is when a blood vessel to the brain becomes blocked.

The good news is that there are lifestyle changes you can make that will lower your risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke. These include:
- Managing your cholesterol through diet and/or medication.
- Not smoking or quitting if you currently smoke.
- Maintaining healthy blood sugar levels through diet and exercise.
- Leading a physically active lifestyle.

Sources:
What you need to know about cholesterol

Total cholesterol is your overall reading. A desirable reading is less than 200 mg/dL. Levels greater than this may indicate a higher risk for heart disease.

HDL, or High Density Lipoprotein, is often called good cholesterol. LDL, or Low Density Lipoprotein, is often called bad cholesterol.

What should my cholesterol levels be?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gives the following recommendation for cholesterol levels:

- Total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dL.
- LDL “bad cholesterol” should be less than 100 mg/dL.
- HDL “good cholesterol” should be 40 mg/dL or above.
- Triglycerides should be less than 150 mg/dL.
- For people with diabetes, heart disease, or those “at risk” of heart disease or related conditions, LDL should be less than 70 mg/dL.

What levels of cholesterol are healthy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What levels of cholesterol are healthy?</th>
<th>Desirable levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cholesterol</td>
<td>Less than 200 mg/dL*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDL (“bad” cholesterol)</td>
<td>Less than 100 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDL (“good” cholesterol)</td>
<td>40 mg/dL or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triglycerides</td>
<td>Less than 150 mg/dL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliter (dL) of blood.

Sources:
What you need to know about blood pressure

What is blood pressure?
Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of the arteries as the heart contracts and relaxes.

What is a normal range?
Systolic blood pressure is the force when the heart contracts and is recorded as the top number.
- Normal range is less than 120 mmHg.

Diastolic blood pressure is the force when the heart relaxes and is recorded as the bottom number.
- Normal range is less than 80 mmHg.

What is systolic blood pressure?
Systolic blood pressure is the force when the heart contracts and is recorded as the top number.
- Normal range is less than 120 mmHg.

What is diastolic blood pressure?
Diastolic blood pressure is the force when the heart relaxes and is recorded as the bottom number.
- Normal range is less than 80 mmHg.

What is hypertension?
Hypertension is when you have repeated blood pressure readings where the systolic (top number) is greater than 130 OR the diastolic (bottom number) is greater than 80.

Hypertension is considered a “silent” killer, because it often goes undetected. With no obvious symptoms, people don’t know their pressure is elevated.

Long term effects of hypertension include damage to the retina of the eye with possible blindness, damage to the heart or arteries, kidney failure and brain damage.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY</th>
<th>SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)</th>
<th>DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORMAL</td>
<td>LESS THAN 120</td>
<td>LESS THAN 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEVATED</td>
<td>120 – 129</td>
<td>LESS THAN 80</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE</td>
<td>130 – 139</td>
<td>80 – 89</td>
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<td>(HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE</td>
<td>140 OR HIGHER</td>
<td>90 OR HIGHER</td>
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<tr>
<td>(HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS</td>
<td>HIGHER THAN 160</td>
<td>HIGHER THAN 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(consult your doctor immediately)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Diabetes is defined as too much glucose in the blood. Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose to be used by our body as energy.

There are 3 main types of Diabetes:

- **Type I** is when an individual’s pancreas produces little or no insulin. It usually starts earlier in life (e.g., early childhood, teen, and young adult years), but it can happen at any age. Type I diabetics require external insulin (insulin shots) in order to stay alive.

- **Type II** is the most common type, affecting nine out of 10 people with diabetes. Type II is often referred to as adult onset, but greater numbers of children are being seen with Type II.

  In Type II, the body makes insulin but it does not make enough, it isn’t able to use it well, or both. Type II is sometimes associated with poor dietary habits and increased weight (obesity).

- **Gestational diabetes** occurs during pregnancy and often spontaneously resolves with delivery. It can re-appear later in life as Type II diabetes.

150 minutes of physical activity every week can help lower glucose, blood pressure and cholesterol, and reduce the risk of developing diabetes.

**What you can do to lower your risk of developing diabetes:**

- Maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Exercise.
- Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. Avoid sugar.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

**Signs of diabetes:**

- Urinating a lot
- Losing weight without trying
- Very dry skin
- Sores slow to heal
- More infections than usual
- Vomiting and/or nausea

Sources:


Toolkit #14

Health Topic Facilitator Training

What you need to know about diabetes
General Suggestions for Group Facilitators

The facilitator helps set in motion the process of group interaction, and serves as a discussion leader. S/he explains the group task(s) and provides structure to help group members stay on topic.

A facilitator proposes ideas, inviting and encouraging comments from everyone and listens as group members bring out ideas. S/he summarizes and relates ideas, especially those of the less active members. The facilitator is there to see that all members feel that they have a say, and that their thoughts and ideas are listened to and accepted.

In keeping with the facilitators’ commitment to encouraging the voices of group members, facilitators should be aware that their leadership role may give their views a little more weight. Facilitators are encouraged to avoid siding with one opinion or another, while simultaneously assuring that the voices of less active or assertive group members have an opportunity to be heard.

Setting the group climate

- Arrange group in circle, so group members can see one another.
- Start by making everyone comfortable. Does everyone know each other? Carry out introductions. Explain how the group will function.
- A clear, short description of the purpose of the group meeting helps focus the group’s attention on its basic task. Decide in your own mind what is important for the group to aim for. Note the time available and the agenda and try to pace the group’s activities accordingly.
- If you have not already done so, complete the Group Norms Activity (Toolkit #4). This way, the group can generate their own priorities for how to work together.

Encouraging group participation

- Keep aware of individual efforts to be heard, and assure quieter members have an adequate opportunity to talk. Invite and encourage comments from everyone.
- Restate group ideas and discussion. Relate ideas and build on the contributions. Try to ask group members to develop their ideas further. Give credit to the person who starts a good idea that the group builds on.
- Keep members on topic. While some diversion may be helpful, you can help guide the group back if they drift far off the topic - for example, by restating the topic under discussion.
- Encourage member-member discussion rather than facilitator-member discussion.
• Convey acceptance of all ideas and feelings by a non-critical attitude and by refraining from evaluating member contributions. If an answer is incomplete, for example, you might ask: does anyone have anything to add? do you agree with that? does anyone have any other ideas?
• Encourage equal participation, and try not to allow anyone to take over and monopolize. Try not to rely only on those who are always articulate and eager to talk. Try to bring in those who aren’t talking by making them feel that their ideas are welcome. For example, you might ask: what do some others think about this? what’s it like in other communities?
• Keep the spirits high. Encourage ease, informality and good humor. Let everyone have a good time. Listen with respect and appreciate all ideas, but stress what is important and turn discussion away from what is not.
• Utilize group resources. In most groups, participants have special knowledge and skills which are useful to the group. The facilitator should become aware of these resources and make sure they are available to the group.
• Keep discussion moving along, but don’t move it faster than the group wants to go. Patience is an important attribute of a good discussion leader!
• When recording ideas on newsprint, capture the main point as concisely and quickly as possible. Do not try to write down every word, but check with group members to be sure your summary statement adequately reflects his/her comment.

Some common problems and what you can do about them

One or two people are doing all the talking.
• You could make a time limit for comments, explaining that this is so everyone can have a chance to speak.
• Ask the group if those who have not said anything have something they’d like to add.
• Ask people to pair up to discuss a topic, and assure that each member of the team has an opportunity to talk. Then the team can share each others’ comments with the larger group.

Someone or several people aren’t taking part, strong opinions or feelings prevent people from saying what they think.
• Consider asking that each person add one idea.

Members are doing distracting things such as having a side conversation that disrupts the general group discussion.
• Ask the people having the discussion if there is a different point of view they wanted to bring up.

People come in late, or have to leave early.
• This is a common problem. You might want to ask a group member who is sitting near the newcomer to explain what the newcomer has missed. If someone has to leave early you might ask that they contact you or another group member to find out what happened.
Group Cohesion Strategies

The following team-building exercises can help promote strong relationships between members of your group.

**Strategies to create a sense of “us:”**
- Identify and refine group name
- Coordinate shoelaces or t-shirts
- Maintain group size - encourage people to attend
- Organize walking groups by neighborhood
- Wear name tags for first few sessions
- Take group photographs
- Use “us” and “we” language
- Create and display group poster
- Set up room to maximize social interaction (e.g., circle, U-shape)

**Strategies to create a sense of belonging or comfort for the participants:**
- Recognize regular and on-time attendance
- Recognize those who help support the group (e.g., most encouraging member)
- Use telephone tree for communicating cancelled sessions or for follow-up when someone misses a session
- Adjust routes for varying levels of ability
- Assign group roles/responsibilities (e.g., attendance tracker)
- Celebrate special occasions (e.g., birthdays)
- Help to coordinate events outside of walking groups (e.g., monthly potlucks)

**Strategies to enhance interaction, communication, and cooperation among participants:**
- Use partner stretching/exercises
- Develop a buddy system
- Implement strategies to work together to achieve common goals
- Identify group goals
- Identify individual goals to support group goals
- Provide feedback on progress towards group goals
- Guide the group in generating shared ideas for group discussions (e.g., nutrition)
- Invite participants to share motives for joining walking groups
- Invite participants to share benefits gained since joining walking group
- Celebrate progress toward group goals
- Distribute contact list
- Encourage carpooling among participants
- Invite participants to select walking routes
Buddy Game Activity

This goal of this game is to encourage social support among walking group participants and to show how social support can impact the group as a whole.

At the beginning of the walking session have each group member write his/her name on a small piece of paper and put it into a hat. Mix the names up and let group members draw a name from the hat (if they get their own name, put it back and pick another). Once everyone has a name, inform the group that the person they have drawn is their official ‘buddy’ for the session. Throughout the remainder of the session each person is asked to make a special effort to ensure their buddy is enjoying the session BUT should not reveal who their buddy is until the end of the session.

Some ways to support buddies are to make sure they have enough water on the walk, complement or encourage them while they are walking, pair up with them during the route and get to know them better, etc. There are many other ways for making sure buddies are having a good walking session - encourage group members to be creative! Remind the group that they should also focus on meeting their own needs during the walk, while trying to do at least one nice thing for their buddy before the walk is over.

At the end of the walking session let the buddies know that the game is officially over and that they are no longer obligated to their buddy. Take 5-10 minutes while everyone is gathered together to reveal buddies to the group. Also encourage group members to share any buddy related experiences they had on the walk. Next, ask group members to reflect on how the game impacted their walk. Did the day’s session seem different than other days? How, if at all, was it different?

Finally, summarize the importance of social support and thank the group for participating.
Toolkit #18 – 22
Handouts on Health Tips for Participants with Chronic Conditions
Health Tips: Cholesterol

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance in our blood vessels. Having cholesterol is normal because our cells need some cholesterol. But when you have too much cholesterol, it builds up, “sticks” together and becomes hard. This is called a “cholesterol plaque.”

Having cholesterol plaques in your blood vessels is like having water flow through a clogged pipe. Your organs (including your heart and your brain) will not get the oxygen and nutrients they need. This can contribute to heart attacks and strokes.

What should my cholesterol levels be?

- Total cholesterol should be less than 200 mg/dL.
- LDL “bad cholesterol” should be less than 100 mg/dL.
- HDL “good cholesterol” should be 40 mg/dL or above.
- Triglycerides should be less than 150 mg/dL.
- For people with diabetes, heart disease, or those “at risk” of these conditions, LDL should be less than 70 mg/dL.

Got high cholesterol? You can change that with a few steps!

- **Diet:** Eat a healthy diet, rich in fruits and vegetables daily. Drink more water and less soft drinks.

- **Physical activity:** Exercise intense enough to make you tired and sweat for at least 150 minutes each week. You may jog walk on flat ground or walk on a pathway with hills.

- **Follow up with your doctor:** Tell your doctor you want to lower your cholesterol and ask what the best diet and exercise program is for you.

Sources:
# Health Tips: Hypertension

## What is blood pressure?

**Blood pressure** is the force of the blood pushing against the sides of the arteries. A blood pressure reading of less than 120 over 80 (120/80) is considered normal for adults.

## What do the numbers mean?

The top number is called “**systolic**” pressure. It is the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom number is called “**diastolic**” pressure. It is the pressure in your arteries when your heart is resting between beats.

## What is hypertension?

**Hypertension** is a disease that occurs when your blood pressure is consistently elevated. Systolic levels above 130 OR diastolic levels above 80 are considered hypertensive. Hypertension can cause organ damage from the high pressure which can lead to stroke (damage to your brain), heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure (damage to your kidneys).

## Are there any symptoms?

Hypertension has been nicknamed “the silent killer” because often there are no symptoms. Symptoms develop during crises and include: headache, blurred vision, chest pain or difficulty breathing. When this happens, you need to call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department immediately.

## Keeping your blood pressure in check: Treatment and prevention

- **Exercise.** Enjoy regular physical activity like: Walking, swimming, cycling or low impact aerobics at least 150 minutes per week (three times per week for 50 minutes at a time or five days per week for 30 minutes at a time). If you are not in shape, start with 15 minutes and increase by 10 minutes every two weeks until you reach your goal.
- **Diet.** Eat a healthy diet, low in salt, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Eat fruits and vegetables, and fat free or low-fat dairy products.
- **Avoid smoking.**
- **Follow up with your health care provider.** If you have been diagnosed with hypertension, take medications as prescribed and know what your blood pressure should be and try to keep it at that level.
- **Relaxation.** Do things that decrease the stress you feel daily: keep a journal, read, pray, and enjoy time with your friends and family.

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**Sources:**
Tips for High Blood Pressure, Medication and Exercise

• Know your blood pressure. Have it checked at least once a year.
• Keep appointments with your doctor. This will help everyone monitor your blood pressure program and make any adjustments to keep your blood pressure under control.
• Take prescribed blood pressure drugs as directed. If you don’t feel well after taking a medication, tell your doctor how you feel. This will help your doctor adjust your treatment so you won’t have unpleasant side effects.
• If you have any questions about your pills, make a note to remind yourself to ask your doctor or pharmacist.
• Make sure that ALL of your doctors know ALL of the medicines you’re taking — both prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
• Know the names and doses of the medicines you’re taking.

• Follow medical advice about diet and physical activity.
• Talk to your physician before starting an exercise program.
• Enjoy at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week (30 minutes of physical activity at least five days a week or 50 minutes three days a week).
• ALWAYS let your physician know about any side effects you experience.
• Don’t stop taking a prescribed medication because your symptoms have gone away.
• Always check with your doctor before you stop taking a medicine.
What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which the body has difficulty handling glucose. As a result, individuals with diabetes have higher levels of glucose in their bloodstream than other individuals.

Important terms for understanding diabetes

- **Glucose** is a simple sugar. Foods that we eat are broken down into simple sugars, absorbed into the body and used as energy. Glucose is important for the function of our organs because it is the fuel that gives our body the energy we need to function in our daily lives.
- **Insulin** is a hormone produced by our pancreas. Insulin allows our organs to absorb glucose from the bloodstream and use it for energy. Without insulin, most of the glucose we absorb will remain in our bloodstream and not be used to create the energy we need.
- **Pancreas** is an organ that, among other things, produces insulin.

So...

Insulin is produced by the pancreas. Our body uses insulin to absorb glucose into the cells of our organs. Inside the cells, glucose is used to create the energy an organ needs to function.

What happens with diabetes?

An individual with diabetes has a decreased ability to absorb glucose from the bloodstream. As a result, glucose builds up. Organs are also less able to use the glucose for energy and become less functional.

Diabetes and Exercise

How can exercise help my diabetes?

Exercise can help control your weight and lower your blood sugar level. It also lowers your risk of heart disease, a condition that is common in people who have diabetes. Exercise can also help you feel better about yourself and increase your overall health.

What kind of exercise should I do?

Talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise is right for you. The type of exercise you can do will depend on whether you have any other health problems. Most doctors recommend aerobic exercise, which makes you breathe more deeply and makes your heart work harder. Examples of aerobic exercise include walking, jogging, aerobic dance or bicycling. If you have problems with the nerves in your feet or legs, your doctor may want you to do a type of exercise that won’t put stress on your feet. These exercises include swimming, bicycling, rowing or chair exercises.

No matter what kind of exercise you do, you should warm up before you start and cool down when you’re done. To warm up, spend 5–10 minutes doing a low-intensity exercise such as walking. Then gently stretch for another 5–10 minutes. Repeat these steps after exercising to cool down.

When you start an exercise program, go slowly. Gradually increase the intensity and length of your workout as you get more fit. Talk to your doctor for specific advice.

Are there any risks to exercising for people with diabetes?

Yes, but the benefits far outweigh the risks. Exercise changes the way your body reacts to insulin. Regular exercise makes your body more sensitive to insulin, and your blood sugar level may get too low (called hypoglycemia) after exercising. You may need to check your blood sugar level before and after exercising. Your doctor can tell you what your blood sugar level should be before and after exercise.

If your blood sugar level is too low or too high right before you plan to exercise, it’s better to wait until the level improves. It is especially important to watch your blood sugar level if you exercise in really hot or cold conditions, because the temperature changes how your body absorbs insulin.

How will I know if my blood sugar is too low while I’m exercising?

Hypoglycemia usually occurs gradually, so you need to pay attention to how you’re feeling during exercise. You may feel a change in your heartbeat, suddenly sweat more, feel shaky or anxious, or feel hungry. When you feel this way, you should stop exercising and follow your doctor’s advice about how to treat hypoglycemia. Your doctor may suggest you keep candy or juice on hand to treat hypoglycemia.
What else should I do to exercise properly?

Many people with diabetes have problems with the nerves in their feet and legs, sometimes without even knowing it. So it’s important that you wear shoes that fit well and have plenty of room when you exercise. Otherwise you could develop blisters or other sores on your feet that can lead to infection and other problems. You should check your feet before and after you exercise to make sure there are no blisters or other sores.

Should I drink more fluids during exercise?

Yes. When you’re exercising, your body uses more fluid to keep you cool. By the time you feel thirsty, you may already be getting dehydrated. Dehydration (not enough fluid in your body) can affect your blood sugar level. Drink plenty of fluid before, during and after exercise.

Exercise checklist for people with diabetes

- Talk to your doctor about the right exercise for you.
- Check your blood sugar level before and after exercising.
- Check your feet for blisters or sores before and after exercising. Wear the proper shoes and socks.
- Drink plenty of fluid before, during and after exercising.
- Warm up before exercising and cool down afterward.
- Have a snack handy in case your blood sugar level drops too low.
- Exercise may reduce the amount of medication you need to take for your diabetes. Talk with your doctor about this.
Health Tips: Arthritis

What is arthritis?

Sometimes our joints become inflamed and painful. Usually this lasts for a short period of time. **Arthritis** occurs when there is ongoing inflammation and pain in one or more joints of the body.

There are two types of arthritis:

- **Osteoarthritis** is the most common type and occurs as a result of “pressure” on the joints over a lifetime. It is a disease of “wear and tear.”
- **Rheumatoid arthritis** is not as common and occurs when the immune system attacks the joints. This type of arthritis is more likely to “run in the family.”

Exercising with arthritis

Exercise is helpful for decreasing your risk for heart disease. Here’s the good news: **Arthritis does not stop you from exercising.** In fact, exercise decreases the stiffness that comes with arthritis and keeps you mobile as you age. Because arthritis is a disease of the joints, how you approach exercise is important.

1. Always talk with your doctor or physical therapist or both about any exercise routine you want to start. They can help you identify ways to approach your personal exercise routine and goals.
2. Stretch daily. Stretch before and after physical activity. This is good for tendons which connect muscles to bones.
3. Do exercises to strengthen your muscles three times per week. Strong muscles better support your joints.
4. When you walk, always wear shoes that are comfortable. Make sure your feet have room. Wearing the right shoe decreases the amount of stress you put on your knees.
5. Swimming and bicycling are also great because they have almost no impact on your joints.

Most important: Don’t do more than you can. “Start low and go slow.”

Sources:
Health Tips: Heart Disease

Heart disease risk factors

Heart disease occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle become hardened and narrowed because of a buildup of plaque on the arteries’ inner walls. Plaque is the accumulation of fat, cholesterol, and other substances. As plaque builds up in the arteries, blood flow to the heart is reduced. Heart disease can lead to a heart attack. A heart attack happens when a cholesterol-rich plaque bursts and releases its content into the bloodstream. This causes a blood clot to form over the plaque, totally blocking blood flow through the artery. A heart attack can cause permanent damage to the heart muscle and increase your risk for another heart attack in the future.

Risk factors you CANNOT control:

- Age (45 years or older for men and 55 years or older for women)
- Family history (people in your family who have had heart disease before age 45 in men or before age 55 in women)
### Risk factors you CAN control:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk Factors</th>
<th>Facts You Need To Know</th>
<th>Steps To Prevent Heart Disease</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| High blood pressure:          | When your blood pressure is high, your heart works harder than it should to move blood to all parts of the body. If not treated, high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, eye and kidney problems, and death. **Check your readings:**
|                               | <120/80 mmHg is best. Systolic levels >130 OR diastolic levels >80 are considered hypertensive. | • Check your blood pressure once a year. Check it more often if you have high blood pressure.  
|                               |                                                                                         | • Aim for a healthy weight.                                                                 |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Be active every day.                                                                       |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Use less salt and sodium.                                                                  |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Eat more fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy products.                                   |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Cut back on alcohol.                                                                      |
| High blood cholesterol:       | Total cholesterol should be <200 mg/dL. LDL (“bad cholesterol”) should be <100 mg/dL. HDL “good cholesterol” should be >40 mg/dL. Triglycerides should be <150 mg/dL. For people with diabetes, heart disease, or those “at risk,” LDL should be <70 mg/dL. If you are age 20 or older, have your blood cholesterol checked every 5 years, or more often if it is high. If it is high, ask your doctor how you can lower it. | • Get your blood cholesterol level checked.                                                |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Learn what your number means.                                                              |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Eat fewer foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol.                                     |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.                                             |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Stay physically active.                                                                   |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Aim for a healthy weight.                                                                 |
| Smoking:                      | Cigarette smoking is addictive. It harms your heart and lungs. It can raise your blood pressure and blood cholesterol and those of others around the smoker. | • Stop smoking now or cut back gradually.                                                    |
|                               |                                                                                         | • If you can’t quit the first time, keep trying.                                             |
|                               |                                                                                         | • If you don’t smoke, don’t start.                                                           |
| Overweight:                   | Being overweight increases your risk of developing high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes. | • Keep a healthy weight. Try not to gain extra weight. If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly. Lose 1/2 to 1 pound a week. |
| Diabetes:                     | Diabetes is serious; you may not know you have it. It can lead to heart attacks, blindness, amputations, and kidney disease. Physical inactivity increases your risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes. | • Find out if you have diabetes.                                                            |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Get your blood sugar level checked.                                                        |
| Physical inactivity:          | Adults should do at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week (e.g., 30 minutes per day five days per week.) | • You can build up to 30 minutes each day by being active 10 minutes three times a day.      |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Try walking, dancing, and playing soccer.                                                   |
|                               |                                                                                         | • Use the stairs instead of the elevator.                                                     |
Toolkit #23 – 29
Resources for Facilitators
Walking Group Health Assessment

This walking group health assessment is adapted from the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire. It may be useful for walkers who have some health concerns as they evaluate whether they should check with their health care provider before beginning a walking program.

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition and that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?  
   - YES*  - NO

2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?  
   - YES*  - NO

3. In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?  
   - YES*  - NO

4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?  
   - YES*  - NO

5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in physical activity?  
   - YES*  - NO

6. Is your doctor currently treating you with prescribed drugs (e.g., water pills, etc.) for your blood pressure or heart condition?  
   - YES*  - NO

7. Have you been told that your cholesterol level is high?  
   - YES*  - NO

8. Do you have diabetes mellitus, sometimes called Type II diabetes or adult onset diabetes?  
   - YES*  - NO

9. Do you have type I diabetes, sometimes called juvenile onset diabetes?  
   - YES*  - NO

10. Are you currently pregnant?  
    - YES*  - NO

11. Has any member of your immediate family (e.g., parents, siblings) developed heart disease or had a stroke before age 55?  
    - YES*  - NO

12. Has your doctor advised you NOT to participate in exercise because of any of the above reasons?  
    - YES*  - NO

13. Are you aware, through your own experience or doctors advice, of any other physical reason which would prevent you from exercising without medical supervision or specific instructions from a doctor?  
    - YES*  - NO

Follow-up:  
*If YES to any of the questions above: You may want to consult with your health care provider before beginning an exercise program. Exercise is good for most people, including those with many of the conditions above. In some cases your health care provider may want to monitor, for example, your medication use or take other precautions, as you begin an exercise program.
[Date]

Dear [insert name of police precinct Commander]:

Beginning [insert walking group start date] [insert walking group host organization or walking group facilitator name] will be facilitating a walking group in your area. The group will consist of approximately [insert approximate # of walkers] community members who will be walking together to improve their health. The group will begin and end their walks at [insert walking group location/host site name and address], and will meet on [insert days and times].

[Insert name(s) of walking group facilitator(s)] will be walking with the group. We would greatly appreciate it if you could communicate this information to your staff, and encourage you and members of your team to join us for a walk sometime soon!

Please contact me at [insert phone # and/or email address] if you have any questions or for more information about the walking group.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Organization, if applicable]
Dressing and Eating Right for Walking

What to wear

The most important item you need for walking is a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Proper walking shoes keep your feet safe and happy!

Walking shoes:
• Should have adequate cushioning, low heels, and be wide enough to allow for foot expansion.
• Should feel comfortable in the toe, arch, and heel.

Invest in comfortable walking shoes. Take the advice of the salesperson at a shoe or sporting goods store. The support and comfort of good walking shoes will prevent strain and injuries that can be caused by poor quality shoes.

Eating right before and after walking
• If you’ve just eaten a meal, avoid strenuous physical activity for at least two hours.
• If you’ve just been vigorously active, wait about 20 minutes before eating.
• If you plan to be active continuously for more than 60 minutes, you may want to take a snack along to keep up your energy level.
• Good choices are light foods and drinks that are high in carbohydrates such as bananas, raisins, bagels, or sport drinks.
Ideas for IceBreakers: Building Your Group

1. My Name. Ask participants to explain where their name comes from or what it signifies. They can use their first, middle, or nickname.

2. Alliterative Names. Participants are seated in a circle, and the facilitator asks each participant to select an adjective that begins with the same letter as their first name. One participant introduces herself/himself/themselves using the alliterative name, and then the next person to the right introduces herself/himself/themselves as well as the previous person using the alliterative name. Continue until each person in the circle has had a turn. (When someone cannot remember a name, the group gives hints and any other help needed).

3. Things in Common. Break into groups of three people each. Ask the groups to identify three things that all three people share in common. Share these items with the large group.

4. Who Am I? Give each participant a blank sheet of paper. Ask participants to write down five different answers to the question, “Who am I?” Each participant should then tape or fasten this paper to the front of his/her/their clothing. The facilitator asks participants to circulate among the group without speaking. After this nonverbal phase, participants are asked to return to two or three different people they thought would be interesting and may now talk with each other. Be sure that everyone has a partner in this last stage of the activity.

5. Exchanging Name Tags. Each participant writes his/her/their name on a name tag. Participants then introduce themselves to someone in the group they do not know. Both persons should exchange information about themselves for two minutes. The facilitator then directs each participant to exchange name tags with the person he/she/they is talking to and then meet another participant and discuss only the person whose name tag he/she/they is wearing. Continue this process and then ask each person to retrieve his/her/their own name tag and introduce themselves briefly to the full group.

6. Birthday Line. Ask the group to arrange themselves in a line in the order of their birthday (month, day, NOT year) without talking.

7. Healthy and Unhealthy. Ask the group to state something they did this past week that was healthy or good for the environment AND something they did this past week that was unhealthy or bad for the environment. [for a variation on this theme, they can name something they did that was healthy or unhealthy for themselves].

8. Organize Yourself. Ask participants to divide into groups of four or five. The facilitator gives the simple instruction of “organize yourselves in 30 seconds.” No additional clarification of instruction is given, even if asked. At the end of 60 seconds (or another set amount of time), the facilitator asks each group to explain how they organized themselves (by height, shoe size, zip code, etc.).

9. Stranded on Island. Ask participants to divide into groups of three or four and imagine that they have been stranded on an island. What five (you can use a different number, such as seven, depending upon the size of each team) items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded? Note that they are only allowed five (or the chosen number) items per team, not per person. You can have them write their items and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them to learn about other’s values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.
Liability Waiver - SAMPLE

Liability waiver to participate in Walk Your Heart to Health Program

This document is to release the Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP), HEP partner organizations and all contracted organizations from any liability resulting from participation in the Walk Your Heart to Health Program and to waive all claims to damages and losses against these organizations which may arise from participation. I understand that participation may include:

- Walking outdoors and/or indoors
- Indoor aerobic exercises (when the weather prevents walking outdoors)
- Stretching exercises
- Group discussion

It is not possible to identify all potential risks of walking. By signing this, I acknowledge that I know that walking and engaging in other physical activities pose some risk of injury; I should not begin a walking program unless I am medically able and have consulted my health care provider about participating. I take responsibility for discussing or not discussing beginning this program with my healthcare provider. I acknowledge that falls, contact with other participants, the effects of weather, the condition of the track, trail or road, are all potential risks.

Participant’s Signature ________________________________________

Date _____________________

Participant’s Full Name (print) ____________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Email ______________________________________________________

Phone _____________________________________________________
Determining Your Needs: Material and Financial Resources

Material resource needs

You will need a variety of material resources throughout your walking group program’s planning and implementation process. As you move forward with your activities, keep in mind ways you might help to acquire or develop some of these materials, using existing resources whenever possible. Basic material resource needs include:

- Office space for staff
- Office equipment for conducting outreach and research (e.g., computers, printers, fax machine, copier, telephones)
- Meeting space, audiovisual equipment, and materials for core team and walking leaders
- “Welcome kit” materials for walking group participants
- Hard-copy materials for walking leaders (e.g., sign-in sheets, attendance records)
- Hard-copy and electronic promotional materials (e.g., flyers, registration forms)
- Items serving as participant incentives (e.g., pedometers, water bottles)
- Materials for interviews, surveys, and other modes of evaluation

Financial resource needs

General, administrative, and personnel costs are the primary expenses for which you will need funds to establish a walking group program in your community. Be sure to budget for all components of your activities, such as the following items:

- Personnel salaries and benefits
- Office overhead
- Office and audiovisual equipment and materials
- Purchase or development and printing of materials for program promotion, walking leader training, and participant welcome kits
- Walking leader training
- Program evaluation
- Items serving as participant incentives
- Telephone and Internet access for program use
- Web page or Web site development and maintenance
- Miscellaneous items such as refreshments during meetings

Donor Acknowledgement Letter - Template

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION
Street Address
City, State, ZIP
Phone Number and Fax

Date

Donor Name
Donor Address
Donor City, State, ZIP

Dear _____________,

Thank you for your contribution of ______________________________. (If contribution is property rather than cash, a detailed description appears below.)

Please keep this written acknowledgement of your donation for your tax records. Starting January 1, 1994, the IRS will no longer accept your canceled check as proof of any donation of $250 or more. Changes in tax law also require us to estimate the value of goods or services, if any, that have been rendered to you in return for your contribution and to remind you that your contribution is deductible only to the extent that it exceeds what we have provided.

Thank you for your continuing support for our important work in this field!

Very truly yours,
Signature
Name of Letter Writer

Description of donated property ________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

(It is the responsibility of the donor to determine the fair market value of the donated items.)

Estimate of the value of goods or services provided in return ________________________________

____ No goods or services were provided.
____ No estimate is provided because the payment was less than $75.

Toolkit #30 – 34
WYHH
Evaluation Forms
### Walking Group Sign In Sheet - SAMPLE

**Walk Your Heart to Health in the Community Walking Program**

Sign-In Sheet

Date: ____________________________ Location: _______________________________

I agree to allow the Healthy Environments Partnership to record my attendance at this walking group session as part of the evaluation of the Walk Your Heart to Health (WYHH) Program.

I understand that my name/contact information will not be shared with any other person/organization but that it may be used to notify me about WYHH events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone #</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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Walk Your Heart to Health
Walking group participant session evaluation

Date ________________________

In order to improve the program, we would like your feedback on this session. We ask that you help us by answering the following questions. Thank you.

1. What did you like most about this session?

2. What did you like least about this session?

3. What can we do to improve this session or make it more interesting?
Evaluation Forms: Participant Feedback Form

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions about your experience with the (NAME) walking group. The information you provide will be used to improve the program.

1. How often do you generally attend walking group sessions?
   1) Once every few weeks
   2) 1 day per week
   3) 2 days per week
   4) 3 days per week

2. How do you keep track of your physical activity? (Please select the primary method)
   1) Pedometer
   2) Daily exercise log
   3) Other method (please explain: ________________________________)
   4) Don’t keep track

3. I set individual goals for my physical activity.
   1) Yes
   2) No

4. My walking group sets group goals for our physical activity.
   1) Yes
   2) No

After each statement about your participation in the walking group program, please indicate whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

5. I like how much physical activity I get in this walking group.
   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

6. This walking group provides me with good opportunities to improve my health.
   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

7. I enjoy being a part of this group.
   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |

8. Please use the back of this sheet to provide any other feedback you would like to share about the walking group.

THANK YOU!
Print out the Physical Activity Log and use it to keep track of your activity. Post it where you will see it frequently (e.g., in your room or on your fridge).

- Listen to your body. Don’t push yourself to the point of pain or exhaustion.
- Vary the intensity (effort) at which you work from day to day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Type of Exercise/Activity</th>
<th>Effort (High, Moderate or Light)</th>
<th>Total Minutes</th>
<th>How I Felt</th>
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</table>
Evaluation Forms: Session Summary

Session Date: ___ / ___ / ___  Day: _______________

Completed by: ________________  Start Time: _____  End Time: _______

Weather (circle all that apply):  Temperature: ______
  sunny  overcast  rainy  drizzle  snowing  windy  cold  hot  warm  humid

Physical Activity:
  Indoor Walking  Outdoor walking  Aerobic Exercise  Other

Route: (i.e., Warren Avenue -St. Jean Street -Shoemaker Street -Conner Avenue)

Team Building/Group Activity (circle and describe):
  Icebreaker  Activity  Conversation/Discussion
  Health Topic  Other  None

Describe:

Challenges/Barriers & Successes: (List at LEAST one challenge and success per session)

Total Steps Taken by Group in Last Week (optional)  ______________________

Leadership Tasks Checklist:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Complete?</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sign-in sheet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Download pedometers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ice-breaker or team building activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warm up</td>
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<td>Cool down</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion topic (if relevant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any additional notes/comments</td>
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Resources
Resources

For more information about the Healthy Environments Partnership, visit:
  • http://www.hepdetroit.org/

For more information about the WYHH study design, planning process, and key findings see:
  • https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3212629/pdf/nihms173439.pdf and
  • https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4446166/pdf/nihms650412.pdf

The American Heart Association offers useful guidelines for physical activity for adults:
  • http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/PhysicalActivity/FitnessBasics/American-Heart-Association-Recommendations-for-Physical-Activity-in-Adults_UCM_307976_Article.jsp#.WrFcyCPMzu6

The American Heart Association offers tips and information on walking:
  • http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/PhysicalActivity/Walking/Walking_UCM_460870_SubHomePage.jsp

Nurture offers ideas for safe and easy exercise lessons that can be adapted based on your space, participants’ mobility, and time available:

The “Let’s Move” Campaign offers a variety of ideas and resources for making physical activity part of your family’s routine:
  • https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/make-physical-activity-part-your-familys-routine

America Walks provides Webinars, discussion forums, Micro Grants, and other information about raising funds for community walking groups, as well as advocating for walking and walkable communities:
  • http://americawalks.org/

Storytelling for Grantseekers is a step-by-step guide to the process of writing a compelling grant:
  • https://www.amazon.com/Storytelling-Grantseekers-Creative-Nonprofit-Fundraising/dp/0470381221

The Foundation Center and The Grantsman Center provide training and support for those who are new to grant writing, or want to improve their skills:
  • www.foundationcenter.org; www.tgci.com

The following directories of available grants allow you to search for grants by keyword, assistance type, location, etc.:
  • The Foundation Center: www.foundationcenter.org
  • Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: https://www.cfda.gov
  • Community Foundation Locator (provided by the Council on Foundations): www.cof.org/community-foundation-locator
  • Grants.gov: https://www.grants.gov

GoDaddy has put together this list of the top 20 crowdfunding platforms of 2017:

The Centre for Social Innovation provides a guide to crowdfunding that includes a basic overview of crowdfunding, as well as more specific information on campaign development and marketing:

The National Council of Nonprofits has many great resources and tips for thanking donors:
  • https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/saying-thank-you-to-donors