

# PEDOMETER INFORMATION SHEET FOR ADULTS



## Be Physically Active One Step at a Time!

A pedometer is an excellent tool to help you be physically active on a regular basis and gain health benefits!

This information sheet explains how pedometers work and how to use them correctly.

### What is a Pedometer?

A pedometer is a simple, cost-effective device used to measure the number of steps you take in a day.

However, pedometers cannot measure the intensity of the activity, such as how fast a person walks or how hard they are breathing.

### How Does a Pedometer Work?

Inside every pedometer, there is a small mechanism that detects when a step has been taken. This mechanism can be a pendulum, a spring or a sensor. Movements causing the hip to raise or lower, such as walking, cycling or running, trigger the pedometer mechanism to count a step.

### How to Correctly Wear a Pedometer

To measure steps accurately, the pedometer must be positioned correctly. Wear your pedometer on your belt or waistband near the front of the hip bone and in line with the kneecap. The pedometer must sit upright to work correctly.

Always test the pedometer, to make sure it is accurately measuring steps (refer to Testing a Pedometer on the next page).

### What if the Pedometer Cannot be Worn Correctly?

Sometimes a person's body shape or clothing choice (e.g., a dress) will inhibit the pedometer being worn accurately. When this happens, it is okay to wear the pedometer in an alternative position. However, it is important to note that a pedometer worn in an alternative position may not be as accurate and should be tested before use.

Alternative positions could include clipping the pedometer to the side or back of a waistband or belt, a pocket that sits below the waistband, a bra strap or a shoe.



## Testing a Pedometer for Accuracy

Test to see if the pedometer is in a position where it will work correctly:

1. Clip the pedometer in place.
2. Set it to zero. If it has a cover, close it.
3. Without looking at the pedometer display, walk 20 steps.
4. Check the pedometer reading to see how many steps it recorded, compared to the number of steps you actually took.
5. Was the pedometer right? If not, reposition the pedometer and try again.

Note: the pedometer should be placed in a position where it gives the most reliable results. As your body changes, you may need to repeat this test periodically to make sure your test results are still accurate.

## How Will I Benefit from Walking?

Walking offers many health benefits, such as:

- helping to prevent heart disease and stroke by improving cholesterol levels, blood flow, and heart function;
- reducing high blood pressure and preventing adult-onset diabetes by reducing body fat;
- helping to prevent bone loss and osteoporosis; and
- boosting your mood.

To achieve health benefits, follow these tips:

- your walking pace must be at least at a moderate intensity;
- walk for at least 10 minutes at a time accumulating a total of 30 to 60 minutes a day; and
- walk on most days of the week.

## How Do I Get Started and Progress Safely?

Wear the pedometer for three days; choose two workdays and one non-workday. Then calculate your average daily count. Once you know your daily average step count, you can set your goal. Your daily step-count goal should be:

- appropriate for your current life situation;
- at a realistic level that you can maintain over time; and
- recorded daily, to help keep you motivated to be active.

Try to gradually increase the number of steps you take each day.

- If you normally average 3,000 steps a day, then you could next aim for 4,000 or 5,000 steps a day.
- When you've reached your early goals and are able to maintain them, you can set fresh goals, e.g., up to 7,000 or higher.



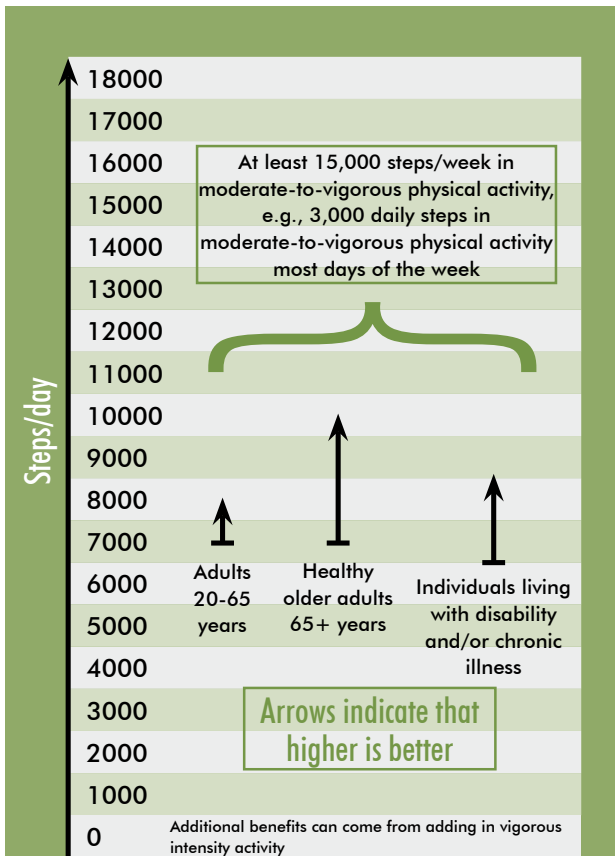


Figure 1. Steps/day scale schematic linked to time spent in MVPA.

Source: How many steps are enough? For adults. Tudor-Locke et al. 2011. Adapted and used with permission.

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults accumulate *150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity each week*. This can be done in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

Try to make your steps purposeful and keep your pace at a **moderate intensity**.

Moderate intensity is when your heart rate increases, your breathing gets slightly heavier and you are lightly sweating.

Make your walks fun and interesting. Change it up by taking different routes and choosing paths or trails that you enjoy, such as walking in your community or local parks.

### How Many Steps?

There are no official step-count recommendations for adults. The number of steps taken should be part of an overall plan to boost your physical activity levels.

However, many adults use 10,000 steps as an achievable goal. You may also refer to the recommendations in Figure 1.

### Looking Forward, Stepping Out

Good luck with using your pedometer to help boost your physical activity levels. Try walking with friends, family members or neighbours; the more the merrier. Aim to have fun every step of the way!





## Looking for More Information about Walking?

- **UWALK**  
[www.uwalk.ca](http://www.uwalk.ca)  
UWALK is focused on empowering people to be active through walking. Track activities and steps online. Challenge yourself and your friends to be more active each and every day.
- **10,000 Steps Conversion Chart**  
[www.10000steps.org.au/pdfs/conversion.pdf](http://www.10000steps.org.au/pdfs/conversion.pdf)  
This page provides examples of other activities and their equivalent number of steps.
- **How many steps/day are enough for adults?**  
[www.ijbnpa.org/content/8/1/79](http://www.ijbnpa.org/content/8/1/79)  
Recommendations by Tudor-Locke et al. published in the International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity 2011, 8:79
- **MapWalk**  
[www.mapwalk.com](http://www.mapwalk.com)  
A great tool that allows you to map walking routes.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center**  
[www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org)  
A variety of helpful resources; the center is located in North Carolina.
- **Walking with Attitude**  
[www.walkingwithattitude.com/challenges\\_public.php](http://www.walkingwithattitude.com/challenges_public.php)  
A popular site based in Australia.

This information sheet may be downloaded and printed for educational purposes. For permission to reproduce for other purposes, please contact:

Alberta Centre for Active Living  
2-131 University Hall, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB T6G 2H9  
780.492.4863 | [active.living@ualberta.ca](mailto:active.living@ualberta.ca)