# Walking – The Perfect Exercise

No time to exercise? Think again! As our kids head back to school, we’re squeezing more than ever into our hectic schedules. But you can work in plenty of physical activity for the whole family — simply by walking more. No other form of exercise is as easy, convenient and inexpensive. All you need is a pair of shoes and the will to get up and move.

### **The Many Benefits of Walking**

“Walking has the lowest dropout rate and the lowest injury rate of any exercise,” notes Childtime's health advisor Dr. James Douglas Campbell. “It can help control weight, build healthy muscles, bones, joints and improve your mood. And just walking 30-60 minutes a day will improve anyone's overall health.”

A healthy exercise regimen and a well-balanced diet are fundamental for a long healthy life. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over the past 30 years, childhood obesity has more than tripled in the U.S. Children who are overweight or obese are at risk for developing hypertension, diabetes, elevated cholesterol levels and other illnesses.

**How to Make Walking Fun**

“Children today are not as active as we were growing up,” says Dr. Doug. “We were allowed more freedom and ran around for much of the day. Today we need to get our children away from the computer and TV screens and do something with them if we want to help keep them fit. A fun and easy way is to take them walking.”

Children will look forward to walking if you make it fun. Playing games as you walk will encourage children to walk greater distances. Play “I Spy.” Have a walking scavenger hunt. Bring along a small bucket to collect “treasures” that children find along the way. Spice up a walk by playing “Follow the Leader” or with “interval training,” depending on your kids’ ages. Try different moves like giant steps, hopping, skipping, walking backwards – mix it up!

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### **Keep Walking Safe**

As with any form of exercise, it is important to keep a few safety factors in mind:

1. Always stretch before you start walking.
2. Walk on sidewalks or on a track.
3. Walk with friends or family.
4. Drink water before and after you walk. If you will be walking long distances, bring a water bottle along on your walk.
5. Don't overdo it. Start slowly and gradually increase your distance and speed over time.

Make a regular routine of healthy family dinners, followed by family walks to keep everyone healthy. (And don’t forget the dog!) This combination can help children develop healthy lifestyle habits early that will last a lifetime.

Source: <https://www.childtime.com/parent-resource-center/parenting-articles/walking-the-perfect-exercise/>