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Walking for exercise offers many benefits

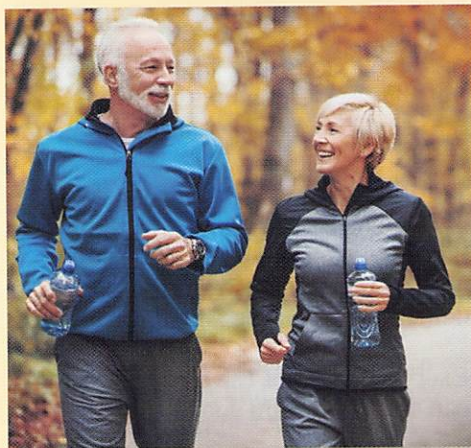
All physical activity is good for your health, but walking is particularly beneficial. Studies show that walking improves our mental and physical health, supports the body's immune system, and helps to maintain a healthy weight.

Regular walking reduces the risk of such common health problems as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and depression.

Walking briskly for an hour a day can cut in half the effect of 32 different genes that contribute to obesity.

Just a 15-minute daily walk can reduce the amount of chocolate you eat when stressed. It can also suppress cravings for chocolate and other sweets.

Women who walked seven or more hours a week had a 14 percent lower risk of breast cancer than women who walked three hours or fewer each week, according to an American Cancer Society study.



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Walking five to six miles a week can prevent the development of arthritis. It can also reduce arthritis-related pain by lubricating knee and hip joints and strengthening the muscles that support those joints.

Walking boosts immune function. A study found that men and women who walked at least 20 minutes a day, five days a week had 43 percent fewer sick days than those who exercised once a week or less. Walkers who did get sick had milder symptoms and recovered more quickly.

As a bonus, walking requires no special equipment, no training, no memberships and no fees. All you need is a pair of comfortable walking shoes and a little time to walk your way to better health.