

Step up...

your body will thank you for it

Research has found that taking about 10,000 steps a day is enough to boost your energy and lower your risk of serious health problems such as heart disease and stroke.

It takes about one hour and 40 minutes to walk 10,000 steps and, at first, that may sound a lot. But simple things like walking to the corner shop to buy bread, using the stairs rather than an escalator at a shopping centre, and parking your car further away from work and walking the rest of the way, can bring you closer to the 10,000.

“Every day life is becoming more sedentary thanks to technology, and people need to think about how they are going to move more throughout the day,” says Anetta Hinchcliffe, Implementation Manager at the 10,000 Steps program at Central Queensland University. The 10,000 Steps project is a

national online program that encourages communities and workplaces to be more active by incorporating 10,000 steps into their daily routine. The project isn't about having to go to the gym or for a run, it's about introducing more incidental physical activity into your life as you go about the things you normally do.

“There are many health benefits from taking 10,000 steps a day,” says Anetta.

“It boosts your energy levels and helps you manage your weight. Being active also reduces your risk of chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. If you take 10,000

steps each day you are considered to be physically active.”

Getting started

You don't have to take 10,000 steps in one burst of activity. Aim to accumulate steps from the time you wake to the time you go to bed. You can keep a record of how many steps you take using a pedometer that clips on to your waistband or belt. During the day it will be an instant reminder of how many steps you've taken – and how many more you need to take. Anetta says you can use your pedometer as a motivation tool to keep you walking towards your 10,000-step goal.



"If you haven't worn a pedometer before, first wear it to work out your baseline steps," says Anetta.

"Without making any changes to the amount of activity you do, wear your pedometer for two working days and for a weekend. Add together the number of steps you take during those four days and divide that figure by four to get your baseline steps."

"Set realistic goals from there. If your baseline is about 6,000 steps a day, aim for 7,000 steps a day. Once you achieve that, aim for 8,000 steps a day and work towards 10,000," says Anetta.

Staying motivated

You have to maintain your 10,000 steps a day for at least a month to turn it into a habit. If you can get friends and family

to walk with you, or to at least support your goal, that can help you stick to your fitness plan. If you walk with a friend you'll have an incentive to walk even on days when you don't feel like it. You'll probably start to notice physical changes after about six or eight weeks. Enjoy them and use them to keep you motivated. Your emotional health is important, too. Use the time when you are walking to think about pleasant things, rather than worrying about family problems and unpaid bills.

As you start to feel fitter, you can introduce other activities that will get your heart and muscles working faster and harder and these can count towards your 10,000 steps. The 10,000 steps website has a conversion table that allows you to work out the step equivalent of activities, such as swimming and cycling.

It's not hard to work towards 10,000 steps if you put a little more thought into how you do everyday things.

So don't automatically get in the car to take your kids to school when you could walk. And walk across the office to ask a colleague a question, rather than calling or emailing. All these small changes will add up and help you take those 10,000 steps towards health.

For more information visit www.10000steps.org.au

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