



Helping people live happier and healthier lives through walking

Every week we support thousands of people to experience the benefits of getting and staying active, improving their mental and physical wellbeing, and reducing social isolation.



**400 schemes across England deliver
1,800 weekly walks which are enjoyed by
24,000 participants each week
and supported by 8,000 volunteers**

Walking has been described as the activity with “the greatest potential for increasing the overall activity levels of a sedentary population”¹ and “the most likely way all adults can achieve the recommended levels of physical activity”.²

It's the perfect way for people to start getting active.





Our walks are free and open to everyone, regardless of ability

They are suitable for people with restricted mobility or fitness; people with declining health who want to remain active but at reduced levels; people new to physical activity, and people recovering from ill health.

Walks last between 10–90 minutes and are graded depending on their level of difficulty. In addition, the walks are led by trained volunteers, and are fully insured, so you can be confident that patients you refer to the walks are well looked after.



“It’s great to be able to refer to something that is accredited by the national Walking for Health programme, it gives you confidence that it’s safe, walk leaders are well trained and insured. It gives security to health professionals as well as participants.”

Hayley Burgoyne, Social Prescribing Facilitator

Visit: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/RCGP

Speak to us: walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk

¹ Hillsdon M, Thorogood A 1996, ‘A systematic review of physical activity promotion strategies’, *Br J Sports Med* 30:84–89

² National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) 2012, Walking and cycling: Local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation, PH41, <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph41>



How your practice can be involved

Below are ways in which your practice can become involved in Walking for Health and the support that we can provide. Whether you're interested in signposting to an existing walk or hosting one from your practice, we'll support you to find an approach that works.

Option 1 - Signpost patients to an existing walks

There may be a great local health walk programme close to your practice that you can recommend to your patients. This takes less than 30 seconds and could be done by any member of staff at your practice.

What you can do:

- Meet the local coordinator or walk leaders and find out about the walks. You could join a walk first to see what it's like
- Offer very brief advice to patients about being active, and encourage them to join a walk
- Identify patient groups that could benefit from being more active and signpost them to local walks
- Promote the local walks at the practice, encourage all staff to mention the walk and use our promotional materials

Option 2 - Host a walk from your practice

Hosting a walk from your practice might help your patients feel more comfortable about joining. Your local scheme can manage the walk, you just need to tell patients about it. Practice staff may wish to join the walk or even become walk leaders.

What you can do:

- Provide a meeting point for walkers to meet before, and optionally after, the walk
- Offer very brief advice to patients about being active and encouraging them to join the walk
- Promote the walk in reception and consultation rooms
- Encourage all staff to mention the walk regularly, and join the walk to experience it for themselves
- Identify patient groups that could benefit from being more active and invite them to walk
- Identify volunteers from your practice to help lead the walks

We can support you by:

- Introducing you to your local walk scheme
- Supporting the set-up of the walk alongside your local scheme
- Providing bespoke promotional resources and handy signposting materials to encourage your patients to join the walk
- Providing access to training for walk leaders (if setting up your own walk)
- Providing access to our database for monitoring and evaluation (if setting up your own walk)
- Ensuring all walks are covered by our insurance



“We approached Walking for Health and asked for some advice, and they were very supportive, they provided us with the training, paperwork and everything we needed.”

Dr Karen Jones, GP and walk leader

What if there's no health walk scheme near my practice?

You may be aware of patients in your practice who are inactive (achieving less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week) and could benefit from taking part in regular physical activity. Speaking to your patients about the benefits of physical activity could help them to consider making changes to their activity levels.

What you can do

- Familiarise yourself with the Chief Medical Officers' guidelines for physical activity and understand the benefits of being active (see back of this pack)
- Give permission and encourage patients to be active at a level suitable for them
- Promote tools like Active 10 which support people to be active for bouts of 10 minutes through brisk walking: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/active10
- Signpost patients to local opportunities, including our Walk Finder tool: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder

Contact us to discuss the options for your practice:

Email: walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk



Benefits for your practice

As well as achieving health outcomes for patients, linking with your local health walk scheme can bring the practice closer to the local community, and give staff morale a boost in the process.

Having a walk to signpost patients to also provides an additional option when dealing with certain conditions. Walking for Health is completely free - for your practice and for patients, so it's accessible by almost everyone.



“With the right initial support a self sufficient walking group is a real option for every practice. With Walking for Health it’s possible to set something up that’s really valuable for your local community - and having a viable exercise option in and around your surgery is a great asset.”

Dr Yvonne Burke, GP



Case study - practice benefits

Binscombe Medical Centre, Waverley

Binscombe Medical Centre is a practice in Godalming, Surrey. Staff were keen to support their patients to become more active, recognising the health and wellbeing benefits of increased physical activity.

Working with the Walking for Health national programme and the local walk scheme providers, they were able to get a walk up and running.

Two members of the clinical staff were trained as walk leaders, and they also recruited interested patients to help out. By promoting the walk online and in their waiting room, as well as actively telling patients about the walk in consultations, they built up interest and over twenty people took part in the first walk.



“The morale for people doing it, for us and for the general practice, is fabulous.”

Carolyn Dawkins, healthcare assistant

They're now able to offer two walks each week; a short, slow 30 minute option suitable for people with restricted mobility and a longer walk of around 45 minutes for people wanting to walk a little more briskly. Both walks start and finish from the same point in the local leisure centre, where the walkers have time to rest, chat and drink a cup of tea in a social setting.

**Visit www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/rcgp
to see a video of the walk**



Physical wellbeing

Walking has been described as close to the perfect exercise³, and we completely agree. Walking boosts physical health and mental wellbeing, can help manage serious health conditions and is accessible to almost anyone.

With a focus on short accessible walks, Walking for Health is particularly appropriate for participants with restricted mobility or fitness; people with declining health who want to remain active but at reduced levels; people new to physical activity, and people recovering from ill health.



“The real focus was to try and get people exercising. People with chronic illness, heart disease, lung disease. To get them out in the open air, get them exercising and walking.”

Karen Jones, GP



“I have seen patients with COPD, asthma, breathing difficulties all becoming much fitter. Patients who’ve had surgery, who were a little bit scared of walking by themselves are able to walk in a group with our support, and it makes them feel a lot better.”

Carolyn Dawkins, health care assistant

Case study - physical wellbeing

Graham, walker

Graham started walking with his local scheme, Walk Stockport, after being recommended it by his practice nurse.

“I was slightly daunted by the idea of joining a group of walkers but actually it was fine. I was surprised that the walk was less challenging than anticipated and very pleased with the way the group made us feel so welcome.

“As time passed I increased my activity levels significantly. The confidence that I found from the walking group encouraged me to undertake lots of longer walks on my own and before long I was walking up to 10km 3 or 4 times a week.

“As a result of joining the walking group and the activities that this inspired I have lost 2.5 stone in weight, lost 6 inches off waist and chest, I am massively fitter, started jogging, and gained confidence. My blood sugar is now below diabetes levels and I no longer take medication.

“I reflect on what the group has given me, and my wife who is disabled, and feel it is much more than was ever hoped by myself or the organisation. The weekly meeting helps not only physical health but also mental health, it has made me more positive and enabled me to be a better long term carer for my wife.

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Graham, walker





Mental and social wellbeing

Our evaluation evidence highlights that participation in Walking for Health can increase wellbeing and promote better mental health.

Walking, as a physical activity, improves self-perception and self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, and it reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue. Physically active people have up to a 30% reduced risk of becoming depressed, and staying active helps those who are depressed recover. In older people, staying active can improve cognitive function, memory, attention and processing speed, and reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.⁴

Our walks help people to get to know their local area and benefit from time outdoors; they provide a regular opportunity to socialise and see other people, and they can be the gateway to other physical activities.



“We’ve had patients coming with quite severe anxiety who’ve been able to join us for a walk on a weekly basis, who’ve made friends and started to feel less isolated and interact with more people, and that’s been very positive and encouraging to see.”

Dr Karen Jones, GP

Case study - mental and social wellbeing

Health walk scheme, Bradford

Champions Show the Way is a Walking for Health scheme delivered by volunteer health champions, and is part of Bradford District Care Foundation Trust. They recently set up a new walk in Keighley, aiming to support women from the local Pakistani community to be more active.

One walker joined the group after recovering from an illness, and was amazed at the impact the walks had on her mental health.



“When the treatment had finished, it then hit me. That’s when I was at my lowest point. I lost interest in doing things. So when I found out about the walking group, and I knew some of the women involved, I felt safe. I felt able to go with them.”

Walker, Bradford

“At the time, my physical health wasn’t fantastic. I wanted to get out and about but I had never felt confident walking on my own. I wanted a support system around me and the walking group did that. It was something so small as going for a walk every day that really lifted my spirits.”

With Walking for Health, walks are designed to be accessible for everyone - so people who haven’t been doing much activity before, or who have health problems which prevent them from doing much, are able to join in.

“It gave me such a boost in my confidence and made me realise that I can do this and I’m not the only one who struggles to walk. There are other people who struggle to walk. It’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

Physical activity benefits for adults and older adults

-  **BENEFITS HEALTH**
-  **IMPROVES SLEEP**
-  **MAINTAINS HEALTHY WEIGHT**
-  **MANAGES STRESS**
-  **IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE**

REDUCES YOUR CHANCE OF	Type II Diabetes	-40%
	Cardiovascular Disease	-35%
	Falls, Depression and Dementia	-30%
	Joint and Back Pain	-25%
	Cancers (Colon and Breast)	-20%

What should you do?

For a healthy heart and mind

To keep your muscles, bones and joints strong

To reduce your chance of falls

Be Active

Sit Less

Build Strength

Improve Balance

VIGOROUS

MODERATE



RUN



WALK



SPORT



CYCLE



STAIRS



SWIM



TV



SOFA



COMPUTER



GYM



YOGA



CARRY BAGS



DANCE



TAI CHI



BOWLS

MINUTES PER WEEK

75 OR 150

VIGOROUS INTENSITY
(BREATHING FAST
DIFFICULTY TALKING)

MODERATE INTENSITY
(INCREASED BREATHING
ABLE TO TALK)

OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH

BREAK UP SITTING TIME



2 DAYS PER WEEK

Something is better than nothing.

Start small and build up gradually:
just 10 minutes at a time provides benefit.

MAKE A START TODAY: it's never too late!

Contact us to discuss the options for your practice:

Email: walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk

Phone: 020 7339 8541

Visit us at www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/rcgp

- Videos and case studies demonstrating how primary care sites have set up their own walk or connected with their local scheme
- Downloadable materials that can support you to promote your local walks and to give to patients in your practice
- Information and evidence about the health and wellbeing benefits of walking

