Implementing the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern

Appendix B

Leader’s note: Be sure to review and practice each of the exercises before you teach this session so that you can demonstrate how to do them.

**PARAPHRASE the following:**

Since our first session, we’ve been doing a warm-up, stretch, walk, cool-down, and final stretch afterwards. These five activities are actually called the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. I’m going to describe these activities in more detail because it’s important that you be able to do the pattern on your own. Appendix B of the workbook contains the approved stretching and strengthening exercises that are part of the pattern.

Leader’s note: It may be helpful to show the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern Poster while you review each step. You can also remind them that all of this information is in Chapter 5 of their workbook, so they can review it later.

**Step 1: Warm up**

This step should take 3 to 5 minutes. Warming up is very important before active exercise. It prepares you physically by warming up muscles and preparing you for exercise, elevating temperature and increasing blood flow. Warming up also prepares you mentally by helping you focus and get energized for the moderate walk to come. To warm up, all you need to do is stroll or walk at a slow pace for about three to five minutes. Alternatively, you can march in place or walk around your house for the warm-up time.

**Step 2: Gently stretch**

This step should take 4 to 5 minutes. Doing leg and body stretches will help prevent shin pain, sore muscles and other injuries, especially as you go for longer walks. Be sure to do each stretch with both your right and left sides. Hold each stretch for 30 seconds on each side and do not bounce. Don’t hold your breath.

Leader’s note: DEMONSTRATE the following:

- Straight leg calf stretch
- Standing and seated hamstring stretch (for participants with balance problems)
- Stand and seated hip flexor and quadriceps stretch
- Iliotibial band stretch
- Other stretches (included in Appendix B of the workbook)
Step 3: Walk

This step will vary depending on your walking capacity. It may be 5 to 30 minutes or more.

This is the “cardiovascular” part of your walk. Follow these guidelines:

- Pick up the pace. Gradually pick up your pace until you are walking at a moderate pace. Walk as if you have somewhere to go!
- Increase your time. To gradually increase your time, you can follow the suggested walking progression chart in Chapter 5 as a guideline. If you are a beginner, start by walking a total of 10 minutes: a three-to-five minute faster segment surrounded by your warm-up and cool-down strolls. If you already can walk for longer than 10 minutes at a time, enter the chart at your current level of duration and go from there.
- Monitor for intensity. Use the talk test to monitor yourself: you should still be able to carry on a conversation even when walking at a faster pace. If you can’t talk without a lot of huffing and puffing or other discomfort, your pace is too fast; slow down to a more comfortable level.
- Check your heart rate. As you become more fit (able to walk for longer times or at a faster pace or intensity), be sure to keep your heart rate within the moderate intensity level. Monitor yourself at least occasionally by using the perceived exertion scale or heart rate scale described in Chapter 5, and that we’ll cover in a little while. These scales help you measure how much your body is working as you exercise.
- Your numbers should remain in the moderate ranges: from 4 to 7 on the perceived exertion scale.
- If you have osteoarthritis, stay within the 50 to 70% range for your age level on the heart rate scale.
- If you have rheumatoid arthritis, try to stay within the 60 to 85% range for your age level on the heart rate scale.
- Pay attention to your body mechanics. Body mechanics means good posture and efficient body movements. Use good body mechanics when you’re walking. Try to do all of the techniques I just mentioned to help you walk safely and comfortably.
- Watch out for making common walking errors. Avoid common walking “errors” such as overstriding, which means taking steps that are too long for comfort, or leaning. The workbook talks about this in more detail.

Step 4: Cool down

This step should take about 3 to 5 minutes. At the end of your walk, slow your pace to a stroll until your heart rate has returned to your pre-walk level.

Please don’t skip this, no matter how hurried you might be. A gradual cool-down allows your body to “down-shift” from high gear to a lower gear and finally back to the low gear of everyday movement.
Cooling down lets your heart rate lower gradually and prevents your blood from pooling in your legs, which can cause light headedness, dizziness, or even fainting.

To cool down, gradually slow your walking pace to a stroll during the last 3 to 5 minutes of your walk. You should be at no more than a fairly light intensity level. (If you measure your intensity, this level would be 3 or less on the perceived exertion scale, or 10 to 14 beats on the 10-second heart rate scale.)

**Step 5: Gently stretch again**

This step should take 7 to 9 minutes. This is the most neglected part of a good walking program. Stretching after exercise helps you prevent soreness, increase flexibility, and maintain range of motion.

Repeat the same stretches you did during your warm-up but hold each stretch for 45 seconds on each side. Do not bounce, and remember to breathe! Appendix B of your workbook has exercise directions and pictures.

Leader’s note: Some final comments about the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern.

Ideally, go through the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern each time you walk, even if you walk in short 10-minute sessions several times during the day. When your time is limited, stretch before and after walking at least one time each day you walk; the first time you walk during the day might make the most sense.

ASK participants if they have any questions about the 5-Step Basic Walking Pattern. REMIND them they can review it in Chapter 5 of their workbook.