

Benefits of Walking Are Many

Coos County Women's Health Coalition Advocates for Women!

How many of us park at one end of Pony Village Mall then drive to the other end to finish our shopping trip? I know I have, especially when hurried and when my energy level is down. However, in reality it takes more time to move the car than to walk the mall, plus moving my body instead of the car will actually increase my energy level. Who doesn't need more time and energy? One easy way to increase both is to exercise on a regular basis. Walking the mall is one easy option, walking your town is another good choice.

In an effort to encourage walking as an easy exercise option the Coos County Women's Health Coalition has developed walking maps for the North Bend and Coos Bay areas. A key focus of the Women's Health Coalition is to promote exercise as a prevention and management tool against chronic disease such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and many cancers. Our goals also include improving the availability and awareness of healthy lifestyle choices and to facilitate health screening in collaboration with community partners.

The Women's Health Coalition was formed in the early 1990s from a networking of community organizations with a common concern for women's health and a belief that healthy, empowered women are the key to a healthy community. The Zonta Club of the Coos Bay Area played a key role in the coalition's formation with its goal to impact breast cancer awareness and to create breast cancer screening opportunities for women who lack adequate medical care resources. In recent years the coalition's programs have included such topics as menopause, osteoporosis, teen health and family planning, female incontinence, and heart disease. Our current focus is to promote a healthy **active** lifestyle for women by educating our community about the benefits of walking.

While creating brochures that include walking maps of North Bend and Coos Bay (available at North Bend Visitor Center, Bay Area Visitor's Center plus other supporting agencies) our group came across an excellent reference on the internet, www.thewalkingsite.com. The site includes walking tips, motivation, guidelines plus many other informative articles about exercising. Everyone can benefit from the positives listed below.

BENEFITS OF WALKING

- Burns calories
- Strengthens back muscles
- Slims your waist
- Easy on your joints
- Strengthens your bones
- Lowers blood pressure
- Allows time with family and friends
- Shapes and tones your legs and butt
- Cuts cholesterol
- Reduces risk of heart disease, diabetes, & more
- Reduces stress
- Sleep better
- Improves mood and outlook on life
- Can be done almost anywhere
- Requires little equipment – appropriate shoes and outerwear
- AND it's Free



A healthy walking plan offers some valuable solutions to life's daily challenges. Sleeping better certainly helps my mood which improves my outlook on life. Lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels will help prevent heart disease, the #1 killer of women. In 2008 my goal was to lower my LDL cholesterol level by increasing my exercise time. Done!

Walking for health benefits is a bit different than just walking to the mailbox and back. Here are some easy ways you can increase your STEPS!

1. Start slow – It is best to get your physician to approve any new exercise plan, especially if you have health concerns or medical conditions. Add 5 minutes each day and try to

walk at least 5 days a week. Consistency is key in creating a new habit.

2. Walk tall – watch your posture. Look where you're going and hold your tummy in tight. You'll feel slimmer immediately plus strengthen your core muscles.
3. Drink plenty of water and stretch your body. Stretching will help prevent injuries. Ask others for help in stretch techniques.
4. Once you've established a routine and increased your time, try to increase your pace. Another way to increase intensity is to add some hills. Don't start with Telegraph Hill; put it on your list of goals.
5. Target goals for:

General health benefits – 30 minutes a day, most days of the week

Cardiovascular fitness – 3-4 days a week, 20-30 minutes at a very fast pace

Weight loss – minimum 5 days a week, 45-60 minutes at a brisk pace.

Remember these are goals and should be attained gradually. Patience and persistence pays off when dealing with your health.

2009 promises to be an interesting time of change and challenges. We're excited to have the Women's Health Coalition organized with a new focus on promoting walking. We challenge each of you to move your body. It's a good thing.

Submitted by Lindi Quinn, 297-0421.

(Lindi Quinn is a member of the Women's Health Coalition along with 25 other community volunteers. The WHC is supported by the following local agencies; Bay Area Hospital, Coos County Public Health Department, DOCS, North Bend Medical Center, Serenity Lanes, South Coast Radiology, South Coast Striders, Southern Coos Health District, Waterfall Community Health Center, Women's Safety & Resource Center, The Zonta Club of the Coos Bay Area.)