

Walking, running and health

Why walk?

Walking can be incorporated into everyday routines and domestic tasks. It is a year-round, readily repeatable, reinforcing, habit-forming activity and by far the most easily accessible means of reaping health benefits with no special equipment required. Walking brings a range of health benefits:

- builds cardiovascular capacity and stamina
- improves weight-bearing or strength of bones
- enables flexibility in the joints
- supports good posture
- supports social wellbeing and independence

Walking is ideal as a gentle start-up for people who sit for long periods, who are inactive or recovering from illness or a medical condition. As general policy, a gradual progression is indicated from slow, to regular pace and on to 30 minutes or more of brisk (i.e. 6.4 km per hour) walking on most days. These levels should achieve the major gains of activity and healthy fitness without adverse effects. The average middle-aged person should be able to walk 1.6km comfortably on the level at 6.4 km per hour and on a slope of 1 in 20 at 4.8 km per hour.

[Walking for health](#), the website supported by Sport England, states that the minimum recommendation from doctors to keep your body healthy and prevent illness such as [high blood pressure](#), [heart disease](#), [cancer](#) and [diabetes](#) is 150 minutes of activity a week. They recommend it as a low impact exercise for people with long term medical conditions and have trained walking leads you can talk to. When we walk our brains release chemicals, just as with any form of exercise, that make us feel good. This will help us to cope better with stressful situations and reduce our chances of illness, [anxiety](#) and [depression](#).

Alzheimer's Society has demonstrated the link between a healthy brain and a healthy lifestyle. Walking that gets you a little bit breathless will protect the brain by keeping blood vessels healthy and thus staving off a stroke and vascular dementia. If you are new to walking or any kind of exercise you will be learning something new and nurturing brain health.

Walking, nature and the environment

Research shows that walking in nature can boost your positivity and help you cope with your emotional and physical health. Trees naturally give off something called *phytoncides* or *wood* essential oils, which have a beneficial effect on our nervous systems. Collecting items such as fir

cones, feathers, leaves and twigs can also bring nature into your home and stimulate a happy and positive memory.

Reconnecting with nature:

- reduces stress
- calms your nerves.
- lowers concentrations of cortisol,
- lower pulse rate and blood pressure

You might like to consider taking a [mindful walk](#) in one of the parks. Urban River has totem poles with a QR code that activates a meditation as you walk. Find these on the [events and activities](#) tab. [Take ten minutes meditation walks](#) in Castle Farm (opposite the Freeman Hospital in High Heaton), Hodgkin Park in Benwell, City Stadium in Shieldfield, Iris Brickfield Park in Heaton and Tyne Riverside Park in Newburn.

Local walking groups and activities

[There are many walking groups, events and sessions in Newcastle](#) [events and activities](#) tab. Those that took place regularly are listed on our fitness activities

[Chain Reaction](#) run walking groups for people aged 55 or over. An opportunity to make new friends and walk with new people.

[Walking for Health](#) is England's largest network of health walk schemes. Part of the Ramblers. They aim to help all kinds of people lead a more active lifestyle.

[Newcastle City Guides](#) take people on guided tours around landmarks in Newcastle. You can join them on a range of public walking tours from May to September.

[Newcastle & District CHA HF Rambling Club](#) has been around since 1902. They organise 3 led walks a week and weekends away.

[Newcastle Volunteer Ranger Service](#) provides details of a number of self-led walks on countryside sites in Newcastle. Locations vary from areas of ancient woodland to country parks developed on reclaimed land. Ranger-led walks are also available by request.

[Newcastle U3A – University of the Third Age](#) has several walking groups, undertaking coastal strolls, nature walks and rambles. Members walk at a steady pace, giving plenty of time to look around and chat.

[Pottery Bank Community Centre](#) has a weekly walking group.

[Search Project](#) organises several different walking groups. Their Wednesday walking group meets on the last Wednesday of each month and lasts 2-3 hours. They also run an easy walking group which lasts around 20 minutes. You can download free Heritage walking trails for the West end of Newcastle from their website.

[Walkerville Community Centre](#) has a walking group.

[The Ramblers](#) is an organisation that helps everyone, everywhere in the UK, enjoy walking and protects the places we all love to walk. They have a website called Walking for Health. They have clear information on how long a walk may take, what the benefits are and maps and directions.

The [Walking Works Wonders](#) scheme is a well-established weekly walking programme offering two free walks in Newcastle and eight in South Tyneside, including Nordic walking.

Walking trails and resources

[Go Smarter Go Active](#) has North East walking and cycling maps and travel itineraries.

[Ouseburn Trust](#) have developed several heritage walks around the Ouseburn Valley. They also have a programme of organised walks and talks.

Dog Walking – You can find social dog walking groups via [Meetup](#). They're a great opportunity to meet new people, get out in the fresh air and find new places to go for a stroll.

Fundraising walks, runs and marathons

There are a number of fundraising walks that bring people together to raise money for a good cause:

- [Great North Run](#)
 - [Walk All Over Cancer](#)
 - [Virtual moonwalk](#)
 - [Breast cancer now walks](#)
 - [Alzheimer's Memory Walk](#)
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Useful Information

- [CMO guidance on being active](#)
- [Benefits of being physically active](#)
- [Find a walk or plan a route using Walk4Life](#)
- [Living Streets](#) is an non-profit organisation that aims to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more
- [Healthworks](#) has created a downloadable guide, [Scotswood walking history trails](#)

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Useful Organisations

Newcastle U3A – University of the Third Age

Email: newcastleu3a@hotmail.com

Website: u3asites.org.uk/newcastle

Telephone: 0191 230 4430

Address: 5 Pink Lane, NE1 5DW

Ouseburn Trust

Email: hello@ouseburntrust.org.uk

Website: ouseburntrust.org.uk

Telephone: 0191 261 6596

Address: Ouseburn Trust, NE1 2PQ

Newcastle & District CHA HF Rambling Club

Email: walking1902@tiscali.co.uk

Website: www.newcastlewalking.co.uk

Telephone: 0191 266 8326

Newcastle City Guides

Email: newcastlecityg@gmail.com

Website: <https://newcastlegateshead.com/newcastle-city-guides>

Telephone: 0191 266 8326

Living Streets

Email: info@livingstreets.org.uk

Website: <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 7377 4900

Address: 2 America Square, EC3N 2LU

Telephone: 020 7377 4900

Ramblers

Email: ramblers@ramblers.org.uk

Website: <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 3961 3300

Address: The Ramblers, SE1 9PA

Related Articles

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