

National Office  
Siege Social

Canadian Physiotherapy  
Association

2345 rue Yonge Street  
Suite/bureau 410  
Toronto, Ontario M4P 2E5  
[www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)

Tel./tél. (416) 932-1888  
1-800-387-8679

Fax/télééc (416) 932-9708  
[communications@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:communications@physiotherapy.ca)

# MEDIA RELEASE COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 10, 2005

## **GET ON YOUR FEET!**

### **30 Minutes of Walking Each Day Has Health Benefits**

Walking is the simplest and easiest form of exercise imaginable. With its natural pleasures and range of benefits, walking occupies a special place in the world of healthy living. Thirty minutes of walking each day can help maintain flexibility, increase mobility and build strength and endurance. Almost anyone can participate at any skill level – from seniors to kids. It's easy, convenient and inexpensive – all one needs is a good pair of shoes.

"Canadians of any age and weight can use walking as a great way to keep active and healthy," remarks **Yvonne Chan**, a physiotherapist and area manager for LifeMark Health in eastern Ontario. "The simple act of walking can play an important role in keeping you feeling good. Walking helps with mobility in your joints, stimulates muscles, pumps blood through your heart and lungs, and it can help you to lose body fat by burning off calories. It can be a walk around the neighborhood or as simple as finding a parking spot further away from the door. Start small and grow into it. It's easy to make walking a part of your everyday life. You just need to find your own fun way to do it."

Canadian physiotherapists suggest, before starting any walking or recreational program, to ease into the activity to avoid undue stress to the muscles and joints. During the first week, walk 10-15 minutes at a slow pace, on a flat surface – avoiding hills and stairs. After week one, maintain the same distance but pick up the pace. Over the next several weeks, build up gradually to a 20- to- 30-minute walk, three to four times per week, at a pace that is brisk but comfortable.

The Canadian Physiotherapy Association suggests the following five **S.M.A.R.T.** Walking tips: **S**tretch, **M**ove, **A**dd it up, **R**educe strain, **T**alk to a physiotherapist.

**STRETCH** – A warm up and cool down is vital to every walking program. Keep muscles flexible and relaxed, joints mobile, and relieve tension and strain by doing a few gentle stretches before and after your walk. Important areas to stretch are the neck, shoulders, arms, low back and spine, hip flexors, buttocks, quads, hamstrings, shins, calves and ankles. Stretch until you feel tension but not pain. Do not bounce as this can tear the muscle fibres.

**MOVE TODAY FOR TOMORROW** – Walking is one of the healthiest activities to help gain and maintain physical mobility. The body was designed with balance in mind and if you somehow walk out of balance, you are placing added stress on the parts of your body that have to compensate in order to keep you upright. With good posture you will be able to breathe easier and avoid back pain. Use the following tips to keep your body in line and add more power to your step.

- Focus on keeping your shoulders square and relaxed;
- Focus on achieving an efficient stride; not too long, not too short;



Canadian  
Physiotherapy  
Association

Association  
canadienne de  
physiothérapie

PHYSIOTHERAPY.  
IT'LL MOVE YOU.  
LA PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE.  
REDÉCOUVREZ LE MOUVEMENT.



- Find and maintain a consistent, comfortable pace;
- Maintain a tall erect posture, keeping your torso upright;
- Focus on keeping your breathing relaxed;
- Think about arm swing, driving your arms backwards, not just forwards;
- Stay relaxed and keep shoulders loose;
- Foot strike is key; pay attention to actively pushing off, rolling from the heel right through and off the end of the toe; and
- Focus on pointing your feet straight ahead.

**ADD IT UP, AN HOUR IS POWER** – Adding up the time spent doing particular activities, along with pacing and rotating them frequently, eases tension to strained muscles. Start slow and build up your walking routine. Planning and pacing are very important. Don't over exert yourself. With proper clothing, you can walk, hike and snowshoe 12 months of the year.

**In spring and summer**, drink water or sports drink before, during and after your walk to ensure proper hydration.

**In fall and winter**, wear a hat to minimize heat loss and dress in layers.

- Your base layer should be a moisture-wicking fabric (avoid cotton);
- The middle layer should be a little heavier that fits loosely over the base layer, also moisture wicking fabric, like Polartec, Thermax or fleece;
- The outer layer should be a lightweight, breathable, windproof jacket that will protect you against cold, wind, rain or snow while still allowing perspiration to evaporate. Also be sure to wear moisture wicking gloves and socks.

**REDUCE STRAIN** – Walking shoes, waist pouches, backpacks, etc., are meant to ease the load, not cause additional strain to your body. Take measures to fit the gear to you, not you to the gear.

- Shop around for the right shoe. Your physiotherapist can make suggestions of what to look for in a walking shoe that best suits your needs and walking program;
- Replace old shoes. The average life of a walking shoe is approximately 400 to 600 miles (620 to 800 km);
- Monitor your posture and body mechanics. Make sure your head, shoulders and hips are lined up over your feet;
- Consider getting orthotics. Custom-made orthotics can correct or reduce improper motions which lead to chronic injuries.
- Keep your stride comfortable. Too long a stride makes for an "over stride" – muscles tighten up and tire before your walk is over;
- Rotate your walking routes from incline to flat, sidewalk to grass, to keep it interesting and avoiding over-use injuries;
- Don't use wrist or ankle weights while walking as they put too much added stress on your joints.
- Drink lots of fluids and be careful of overheating or dehydrating during activity;
- Listen to your body and watch for recurring or persisting pain – if concerned, seek early professional attention from a physiotherapist.

**TALK TO A PHYSIOTHERAPIST** – Physiotherapists are the mobility experts for both the fit person who requires specific fitness and injury prevention advice, and for the elderly, injured or disabled person who has specific needs and considerations. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to increase mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function. A physiotherapist will assess your injury and provide appropriate treatment that will promote an earlier return to your walking program as well as advice on how to prevent recurrence of injury.

For more information on walking, visit the 'Walking Tips' page found on the Canadian Physiotherapy Association's web site [www.physiotherapy.ca/NPM2004walkingtips.htm](http://www.physiotherapy.ca/NPM2004walkingtips.htm)

Since 1984, physiotherapists from across the country have designated time each year to promote physiotherapy in Canada. This united voice brings power to the NPM message and focuses attention on the value of physiotherapy in Canadian Healthcare.

**National Physiotherapy Month runs through May 23, 2005.** For more information about injury prevention, visit the Canadian Physiotherapy Association's web site [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca), where you can find more information on walking, along with the three other accompanying NPM themes – golfing, gardening and running.

- 30 -

**Media Contact:** Shari-Lynn Sare, Media Relations and Marketing Coordinator  
Canadian Physiotherapy Association  
Tel: 416- 932-1888 / 1 800 387-8679 x244  
[communications@physiotherapy.ca](mailto:communications@physiotherapy.ca) / [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)