

15 Great Reasons to Take a 15-Minute Walk

There's not much that a little stroll can't fix.

By [Charlotte Hilton Andersen](#)

Whether you're just having a down day or a down life, taking a walk can instantly lift your mood—especially when you go outdoors. Not only can walking make you less depressed but according to a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, depression sufferers who took a daily walk showed just as much improvement in their symptoms as people on medication. In fact, 60 to 70 percent of the subjects could no longer even be classified as depressed. And a follow-up study found that the mood boost from the walk lasted longer than that of the medication. Here are other ways to [relieve depression naturally](#).

Walking benefit: Off-the-charts creativity

Stumped for an idea? Take a quick stroll around the block. Whether you need a solution to a problem at work or you're looking for inspiration for your novel, walking gets your creative juices flowing in all areas. A recent study published in *Frontiers in Neuroscience* found that walking improved both convergent and divergent thinking, the two types associated with enhanced creativity.

Walking benefit: Allergies be gone

Sidelined by sneezing, sniffing and itchy, watery eyes, thanks to all the pollen in the air? Your instinct may be to close all the windows and hide until winter, but your instinct might be wrong. According to a Thai [study](#), researchers found that walking or running—even for just 15 minutes—can reduce sneezing, itching, congestion and runny nose by up to 70 percent. Don't miss these other [natural allergy relievers](#).

Walking benefit: Metabolism to the max

Metabolic syndrome—the evil trifecta of increased blood pressure/cholesterol, high blood sugar, and fat around your waist—is one of the worst side effects of our sedentary lifestyle. It signals diabetes, heart disease, and even early death. But we have an old-fashioned cure to this modern-day disease: exercise. Any cardio exercise, including walking, can stop metabolic syndrome and even reverse the damage, according to a [study](#) published in *Circulation*. But intensity is the key to revving up your metabolism. Rather than just taking a leisurely stroll, try alternating walking fast and slow. Here are other ways to [walk off weight](#).

Walking benefit: Seven. Extra. Years.

Want to live longer? Walk. [Research](#) has shown that you can add up to seven years to your life by exercising daily, regardless of what you weigh. Even better, those extra years will be good ones as folks who walk are more happy. A separate [study](#) found that people who exercise report feeling happier, more excited, and more enthusiastic about their future than their couch-potato brothers. Don't miss these other habits that help you [live a long and vital life](#).

Walking benefit: Cash in the bank

Fitness can be pricey! Money for a gym membership, home exercise equipment, workout clothes, and shoes adds up fast. But it doesn't have to. Walking needs absolutely nothing to do it—even shoes are optional!—but still provides great health benefits. And not only does it save you money on things but it also saves you money in healthcare. Experts at Harvard [estimate](#) that for each dollar spent on preventative health, including time spent walking, you save \$2.71 in future health costs.

Walking benefit: Nature's anti-wrinkle cream

The fountain of youth exists—but you're going to have to walk to find it. And we mean that literally. People who walk regularly not only look younger than their age (as long as you're remembering your sunscreen!) but they may also be younger on a cellular level, according to [research](#) published in *PLOS One*. The scientists found that cardiovascular exercise, like walking, can preserve or even lengthen your telomeres, the parts of our DNA that shorten as we age. Who's worried about wrinkles now? Here are more tricks that [dermatologists use to keep skin young](#).

Walking benefit: Zzzzzzzzzz....

Getting a solid eight hours snoozing in the sack is one of the most important things you can do for your health. But sometimes that's easier said than done. Thankfully a brisk walk is basically Ambien, minus the pill (and the scary sleep-walking stories). In a large [meta-analysis](#) of sleep studies, researchers found that regular walkers had longer and better quality sleep. And for those unlucky few who still had insomnia? Walking helped reduce the number of sleepless nights they experienced. These tips from sleep doctors will also help you [sleep better](#).

Walking benefit: Keep calm and carry on

Raise your hand if you're stressed out. Okay, okay, put *both* your hands back down. Most of us swim in a pool of stress every day and that takes a serious toll on our mental and physical health. But science says that walking is one of the fastest, most effective ways to calm down. Moving clears cortisol, the "stress hormone", out of your system and also helps stop the never-ending stream of worries going through your mind, according to a [study](#) published in *The American Journal of Cardiology*.

Walking benefit: Banish brain drain

It's official: Walking is as good for your brain as it is for your body. A comprehensive [study](#) of the effects of exercise on the brain found that it benefits all aspects of your mind including memory, cognition, learning, reading and it even increases the size of your brain to boot. Even better, walking protects your brain by lessening your risk of getting cognitive illnesses like Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Walking benefit: Drug-free painkiller

Chronic pain has been called a silent epidemic, with an estimated 100 million Americans currently living with it. And if you're one of those people battling daily pain the last thing you probably want to do is get up and go for a walk. But researchers [found](#) that moderate walking improved chronic pain in people, both in the short term and the long run, even if the underlying condition remained uncured. Exercise may not be able to cure chronic pain but it can help you deal with it better.

Walking benefit: Beefed-up bones

Bone density may not be the most exciting health benefit of walking but it's an important one. People with stronger bones avoid osteoporosis and all the problems that come with it like fractures, disability, and spine shrinkage (seriously, you can get shorter). And the best way to get strong, healthy bones is by doing weight-bearing exercises like running, dancing and, yes, walking, according to a large [study](#) done by Oxford. But when it comes to bones, it's definitely use it or lose it: To keep your bones strong you have to keep exercising. The researchers found that adults who walked regularly had better bone density throughout their lives than their inactive friends.

Walking benefit: X-Ray vision

Okay so maybe you won't have the ability to see through walls but you can protect your vision as you age by taking a daily walk, according to a [study](#) published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*. Researchers found that people who did regular aerobic activity had healthier eyeballs and were less likely to suffer from problems like retinal degeneration and age-related vision loss. So even if you aren't Superman, you'll still have super sight. Get more simple ways to [improve your vision](#).

Walking benefit: Quality time with loved ones

Taking a walk alone can be great for clearing your head or blowing off some steam but it also provides a great opportunity to bond with friends and family—far away from electronics and other distractions at home. Even better, you set a powerful example because when they see you walking, it encourages them to walk more too, according to a [study](#) published in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*. Try these other little ways to [banish loneliness](#).

Walking benefit: Free miracle drug

Exercise has been [called](#) a "miracle drug" for its ability to help prevent cancer, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, and many, many other illnesses. Let's be honest, there doesn't seem to be a single health condition that it can't help in some way. And unlike real drugs, walking has no side effects, is easily accessible, affordable, effective, and best of all you don't need a prescription!