



Pedometers – A Moving Experience!

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I couldn't sit still while I read this study! Researchers had found that brief stretch breaks, just five minutes, gave office workers measurable improvements in their diabetes and heart disease risks. The more brief energy breaks these sedentary workers took away from their desks, the better their metabolic health became. That included improvements in blood sugar, insulin responsiveness, and blood triglycerides.



Does that really matter? Certainly, knowing that, on average, the more hours per week a person sits, the shorter their life span. (Healy "Breaks in Sedentary Time: Beneficial Association with Metabolic Risks," *Diabetes Care*, February 2011).

The best thing about these brief motion breaks is they add up! You can measure how many of these life-saving steps you accumulate in a day by wearing a pedometer.

- If you walk less than 5,000 steps per day, you are officially "sedentary." Bad news for you! This poses a risk to your health and may shorten your life, due principally to diabetes and heart disease.
- If you add just 10,000–20,000 steps per week, that is about 5-10 miles per week – one or two miles a day – your metabolic health will improve. Lower blood sugar, lower body insulin levels, and lower triglycerides will prove this.
- If you add 30,000 steps per week, that is about 15 miles per week – about two miles a day – your body fat will decrease, you will lose some weight, and LDL "bad" cholesterol will drop.
- The American Heart Association advises Americans to add 20,000-30,000 steps per week to their ordinary activity, that is about 10 miles per week – about 1.5 to 2 miles per day – to improve health and offset our nation's obesity epidemic.
- For most average sized people, 2,000 steps equals one mile, which burns 100 calories. Adding just 2,000 steps per day would burn about 10 pounds of body fat in a year!

Ironically, this works even better for obese people. Because they weigh more, heavier people burn more calories with each step than do individuals who weigh less. Obese people can achieve benefits by walking just 2/3–3/4 as many steps as I listed above.

The average American adult gains one to two pounds per year, owing to our bad diets and sedentary lifestyle. Most people can look back to their high school weight and add one to two pounds for every year since graduation, to arrive at their current weight. But, we have a simple cure for this depressing news! For 90 percent of us, just increasing exercise by 100 calories per day, which is 2,000 steps – about one mile – would stop this weight gain. One researcher said it like this: "Relatively small changes in energy intake and expenditure could arrest weight gain." (Hill Jo, "Using the Energy Gap to Address Obesity," *American Dietetic Association*, 2009 November 1/09(11):1848).

Is this easier said than done? Of course! It seems all good things are, and few things matter as much as this. I'll explain that by paraphrasing what the great author GK Chesterton (1874 – 1936) said about Christianity: "(Diet and Exercise) have not been tried and found lacking. (They) have been found difficult, and left untried."

It's time to get a pedometer, and give it a try!