

Walking: Step Towards Healthy Life

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To,
Editor,

Health benefits of regular physical activity are noticeably increased in recent years and considered as a critical step towards a healthier population. Walking is one of the most accessible forms of physical activity which is appropriate for all age groups and costs nothing.¹ Several studies have shown that walking has higher levels of adherence than other forms of physical activity, possibly because it is convenient and overcomes many of the commonly perceived barriers to physical activity such as lack of time, lack of fitness or lack of skill. It is now becoming obvious that walking may provide some of the same health benefits as do more vigorous types of physical activities along with a lower risk of injury and sudden death.² Walking has been shown to have a definite role in prevention of major non communicable diseases, including type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, osteoporosis and cancer. Association between walking and reduction in deaths from all causes, ranging from 19–30 per cent depending on the frequency and length of walking is well documented. As regards to type 1 and 2 diabetes one death per year could be prevented for every 61 people who pursue walk at least two hours per week.³ Regular walking has also been shown to increase maximum aerobic capacity and decrease blood pressure, cholesterol and other cardiovascular risk factors with as little as one hour of walking per week. Walking also has impact on mental health and can relieve symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress and improve cognitive performance. The usual recommendation for adults is 30 minutes daily walk for at least five times a week. A recent study of 400,000 people have found that just 15 minutes a day of brisk walking can add up to 3 years of life expectancy. Every additional 15 minutes of daily exercise reduced all-cause death rates by a further 4 per cent. Though walking has health benefits at any pace, brisk walking (at least 3 miles per hour)

is particularly said to be beneficial than slow walking⁴. Center for Disease Control (CDC) has recommended an easy rule of thumb for gauging levels of physical activity, the talk test” If we are doing moderate intensity activity we can talk but upon vigorous activity, one will not be able to say more than a few words, without pausing for a breath.⁵ This simple test can help us guard our pacing while walking. As doctors there is a dire need that we should stick to walking and be a role model for the community and our patients. The message may clearly be conveyed as “Let`s start walking from today as prevention is always better than cure” and “ Improvement in quality of life is the promise made by brisk walking” .

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