

- It creates an opportunity to teach younger children about street safety, such as familiarizing themselves with their neighbourhood, knowing where their friends' houses are and learning where and how to safely cross streets, building confidence and independence.
- If well-timed (i.e., not rushing frantically to catch the opening bell!), it affords the opportunity for a pleasant, relaxed drop-off and a hug at the entrance – a calming and energizing way for your child to begin their learning day.

If walking to school starts at a young age, it simply becomes “normal” but older children who have become accustomed to being driven to school may resist. Explaining to them the benefits of walking is unlikely to win them over, as children (and people in general) do not appreciate the gravity of consequences in the distant future.

To help make walking more appealing to children, invite their friends who live nearby to join you and, time-allowing, select a route that offers points of interest (e.g., friends' houses, large trees, parks). Use a calendar or an app such as Pacifica (www.thinkpacific.com) to track frequency of walks for positive re-enforcement. Some suggest rewards for walks, which you may consider but I, personally, recommend against this, as it fosters development of an “external locus of control” (i.e., walking for the reward offered, rather for the experience of walking), which is a strategy for short-term success, but not likely to lead to creation of a life-long health behaviour.

How can I get even more benefit out of walking?

The good news is that most of the health benefits associated with walking are achieved with “brisk” walking, but even greater benefits are associated with “vigorous” activity, particularly with respect to cancer prevention. To move from “moderate” to “vigorous” exercise – wait for it – walk faster! When you are walking at such a rate that you are breathing using your mouth as well as your nose, you are exercising vigorously. In fact, walking very quickly, but suppressing the natural instinct to jog, is more physically demanding than jogging.

To add further benefit to your walk, you can also walk in a natural setting. Research has demonstrated that time spent walking in nature, compared to an urban environment, has benefits associated with decreasing depression, negative thoughts and blood flow to areas of the brain associated with “brooding” behaviour.

Nature walks may not be convenient for the average city-dweller, but conditions approximating nature can be found on quiet side streets and in city parks. That said, every city has walks associated with urban green spaces that provide a great opportunity for a week-end activity of quiet contemplation alone, a romantic walk with a partner or a family activity with children.

I have always loved walking. It is a superb activity for your physical and mental health. It's simple, affordable and convenient and an opportunity to contemplate and explore. To quote the writer and dramatist Gwyn Thomas, “*But the beauty is in the walking – we are betrayed by destinations.*” I hope it can become a source of joy and health to you as well. ●



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PULLING IT ALL *together*

Walking is a great activity for your physical and mental health: it is simple, affordable and convenient. To gain the benefits of walking:

- Plan activities in your routine that can be carried out by walking
- Adjust your routine and environment to support your decision to walk
- Identify nature walks in your local area, and walk on week-ends
- Look for “greener” routes to arrive at these destinations
- Walk “briskly”, 30 minutes daily, five days-a-week

COME ON BOOTS...OR SNEAKERS... *get walking!*

Many cities have routes that are well-suited for strolling or specially designated for hiking. Some places just can't help themselves – they're made for walking!

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|---|--|
| <p>Montreal
 www.mtlblog.com Search
 “The best places to hike in and around Montreal”</p> | <p>Edmonton
 www.everytrail.com
 Search “Edmonton”</p> |
| <p>Ottawa
 www.everytrail.com
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 www.outdoorvancouver.ca/vancouver-hiking-trail-guides</p> |
| <p>Toronto
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 www.trails.gov.ns.ca</p> |
| <p>Winnipeg
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 www.hikingnb.ca</p> |
| <p>Calgary
 www.avenuecalgary.com
 Search “6 Great Walks in Calgary”</p> | <p>PEI
 www.islandtrails.ca/en</p> |
| | <p>Newfoundland
 www.newfoundlandlabrador.com/thingstodo/hikingwalking</p> |