

# walk 4 life

## tips to get walking every day



This guide is full of helpful tips so you get the most out of your walks. It will help you find out things like why it's good to walk, places you can go, how to stay safe and anything else you can think of to help you get up and walking about in your area.

Let's get walking then!



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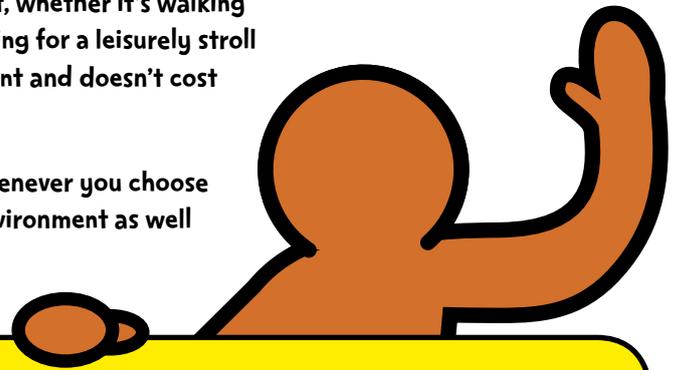


Eat well Move more Live longer

# why walk?

The first question you might have is “Why should I go for a walk?” The answer is that walking is a great way for families to be up and about, whether it’s walking to the shops, to school, up stairs, walking the dog or just going for a leisurely stroll with family and friends. It doesn’t need any special equipment and doesn’t cost anything either!

And since walking doesn’t cause congestion or pollution, whenever you choose to walk rather than take the car, you’re being kind to our environment as well as to your health.



## Top 5 walking facts

Here are 5 things you might not know about walking:

- It’s easy to think you’re protecting the kids from fumes by keeping them inside the car. But pollution inside can be up to three times the level it is outside on the pavement – so step out and enjoy the fresh air!
- If we all swapped one car journey a week for walking, car traffic would reduce by at least 10%.
- The average person could save £160 every year by walking instead of driving the journey to school – just think what fun you could have with that extra money...
- Walking just 1 mile burns over 100 calories!
- About a third of all the journeys we make are less than a mile. A mile is only about a 20 minute walk.

## More than just walking

Another great thing about walking is that it lets you do two or more things at once. So while you’re out and about you could also be:

- Getting to places you need to visit, like work, school or the shops.
- Spending time with friends, children and family. Walking and talking go hand-in-hand and you might even make new friends along the way!
- Exploring your local area – it’s the best way to discover hidden places you might not know are there.
- Enjoying green spaces and nature – fresh air, peace and quiet, and a place for the kids to run around.
- Or just taking time to relax by yourself!

## It can do you the world of good too

Because walking helps towards your ‘60 active minutes’ a day, it can reduce your chances of getting serious illnesses like cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease in the future.

We all know how a good walk can help us collect our thoughts, and being out in the fresh air is a great way to de-stress and improve our mood.

# walking's just not for me...

Here are some common reasons why people feel they can't go for walks. Are any of them the same as your reasons? Hopefully you'll see that anyone can start walking, whatever they do and wherever they live.

## "I don't have the time"

Walking is the easiest exercise to fit into a busy lifestyle since you can do it anywhere at a time that suits you. It's better than sweating on a packed bus or train, or getting stressed in a traffic jam. You'll still have to make a little effort to find time, but remember active people live longer and have a healthier old age. So think of your walking time as a good investment!

## "I don't know any good places to walk"

Sometimes main roads don't feel like the nicest and safest places to walk. But there are lots of quieter streets, parks, watersides and green spaces even in busy urban areas if you know where to look for them. Ask friends if they know good areas to walk, visit your local council's website or go to your library and look at maps of your area. You can also find lots of organised walks by visiting the 'Walking the Way to Health' website [here](#) to help you find places that are fun to get to on foot.

## "I don't feel safe on the streets"

It's understandable that people are concerned for their personal safety, but it doesn't have to stop you enjoying the benefits of walking. If you can, walk with a companion or on an organised walk, and see the section on safety in this guide for more tips on walking safely. Also, the more people who walk, the safer the streets will be!

## "I don't have anyone to walk with"

Ask your family, friends and colleagues if they're interested in walking with you. Or try an organised walk – you can find out about these by searching for them online ([www.walkengland.org.uk](http://www.walkengland.org.uk) is a good place to start).

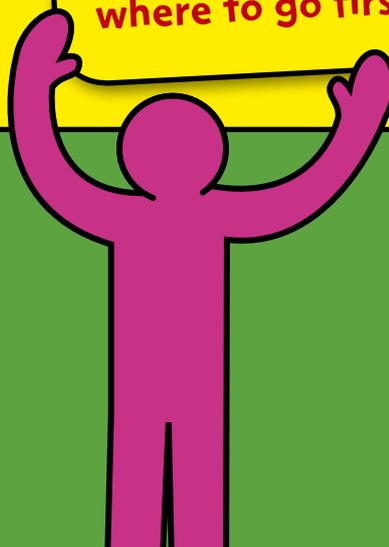
## "My kids won't walk"

Exercise is really important for kids, but it can be difficult to get them away from indoor activities like watching TV. Take a look at the 'Fun games for every day walking' and 'Fun walking games for parks and woodland' [here](#) for great ideas to make walking more interesting for them.

## "I'm too unfit to walk"

Walking is a natural and easy exercise that you can start doing in small amounts and build up slowly. That makes it perfect for people who are very unfit or recovering from an illness. Very few of us are so unfit that we'd endanger ourselves by walking, but if you have any doubts, talk to your doctor first.

There are so many good reasons to start walking, the only thing you have to do now is choose where to go first!



# walking is easier than you think

You can walk pretty much anywhere. To the shops, to school, to see friends, to the park – all you need to do is step out of your front door and decide where you'd like to go. Try getting off the bus 1 or 2 stops early and walk the rest of the way, or walk to the next stop instead of waiting for the bus – it's that easy!

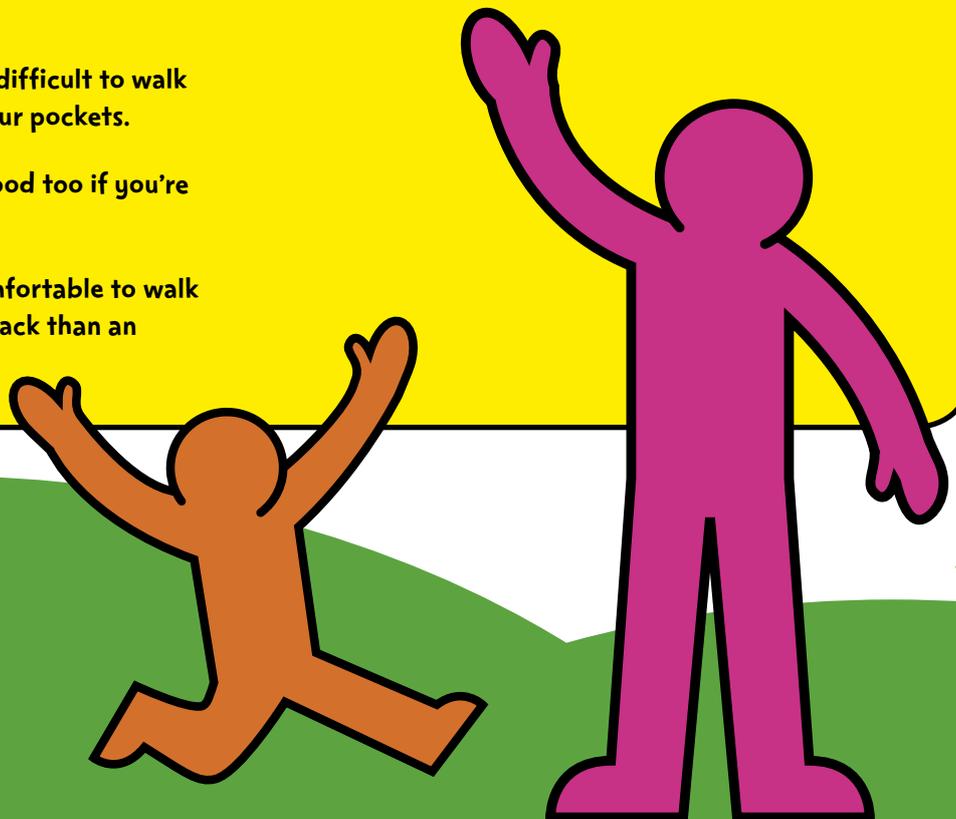
Here are some things to think about so you make the most of your walk:

- Make sure you're wearing comfortable clothes and shoes.
- A few thin layers of clothing are better than one thick layer. So you can take off layers as you warm up, or add them if you get cold!
- Unless you're sure it's not going to rain, take a jacket – it's easier than holding an umbrella.
- A hat can keep you warm in winter and protect you from the sun in summer.
- Wear gloves if it's cold – it's difficult to walk briskly with your hands in your pockets.
- Take some water and some food too if you're going on a longer walk.
- A small backpack is more comfortable to walk with, and is better for your back than an ordinary bag.

## Walk this way

Here are our top tips to make sure your walks are as comfortable and easy as possible:

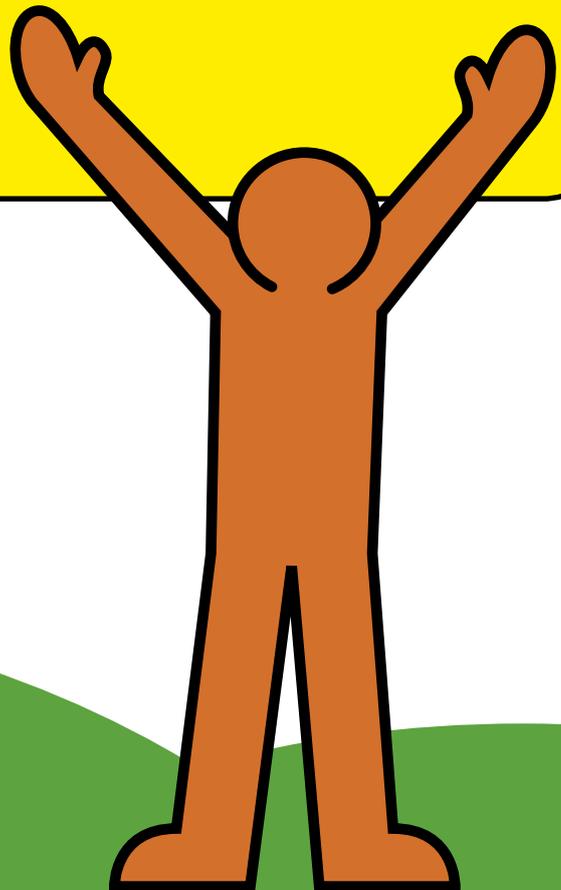
- Stand up straight but relaxed and look ahead.
- Try to swing your arms in time with your stride.
- Breathe deeply and in rhythm with your steps if you can.



# staying safe

Some people are put off walking because they're worried about being safe. But by taking a few precautions we can all feel safe while we walk.

- Choose routes that are well-used, and well-lit if you walk at night.
- Know where you're going – if you don't know the area well, take a map or leaflet.
- Be prepared to change your route if you feel unsafe for any reason.
- Take a travel pass or some change in case you need to use public transport.
- Take a mobile phone and/or tell someone where you've gone if you're going on a long walk.
- If you're wearing headphones, make sure you can hear traffic and are aware of everything that's going on around you.
- Take care on busy roads and road crossings, and paths used by cyclists.



# safety for kids

Kids aren't as good as we are at being aware of their surroundings and judging things like the speed of traffic and how far away cars are. So it's important that we help them understand road safety and give them the confidence to walk on their own when they get older.

Here's the 5-step Green Cross Code that tells kids how to stay safe when they're out walking.

## 1. First find a safe place to cross

Make sure there is space to reach the pavement on the other side. Where there is a crossing nearby, use it. It's safer to cross using a subway, a footbridge, an island, a zebra crossing or where there is a crossing point controlled by an adult.

Otherwise choose a place where you can see clearly in every direction. Try to avoid crossing between parked cars and on a blind bend or close to the brow of a hill. Move to a space where drivers and riders can see you clearly.

## 2. Stop just before you get to the kerb

Check you can see if anything is coming and that drivers can see you. Do not get too close to the traffic. If there is no pavement, keep back from the edge of the road but make sure you can still see traffic coming.

## 3. Look all around for traffic and listen

Traffic could come from any direction. Listen as well, because you can sometimes hear traffic before you see it.

## 4. If traffic is coming, let it pass

Look all around again and listen. Do not cross until there is a safe gap in the traffic and you are sure that there's plenty of time. Remember, even if traffic is a long way off, it may be coming towards you very quickly.

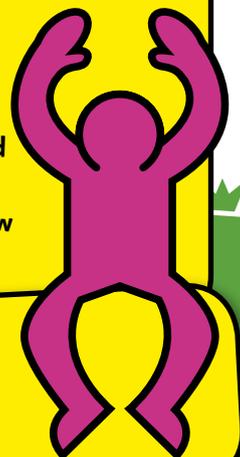
## 5. When it is safe, go straight across the road – do not run

Keep looking and listening for traffic while you cross, in case there is any traffic you did not see, or in case other traffic appears suddenly. Look out for cyclists and motorbikes moving between lanes of traffic. Don't walk diagonally across the road.

If you're with very young kids, hold their hand while you cross the road. And if there is no pavement, walk on the right hand side of the road to face the traffic coming towards you. Walk one behind the other at bends in the road or at night or if there is a lot of traffic.

## Walking at night

'Be bright, be seen' is an easy way to help road users see you when it's dark. Wear or carry something light coloured or bright – fluorescent and reflective materials are good for this as they show up in daylight and at dusk.



If you'd like to find out more about road and pedestrian safety, visit the Think! website [here](#).

# making walking fun for kids

Getting out in the fresh air with the kids won't only make them happier and help towards their '60 active minutes' a day; it could also get them into good habits for later life. And it's a great way to spend quality time with your kids as you can talk and explore together.

We all know that kids can get bored easily. That's why walks need to be enjoyable and interesting. Here are some tips on making walking lots of fun:

- Don't say you're "going for a walk" – instead make it an outing or adventure to somewhere they'll like, such as a park, a playground, woods, a pond or a friend's house.
- Make it a treat – take things to eat and drink, or even a picnic.
- Don't make it too long and hard. If you are out on a longer walk, stop for breaks.
- Walk at their pace and cut the walk short if they get tired.
- Make sure they have comfortable clothes and shoes, and carry extra layers for them.
- Remember hats and sun cream if it's hot, and take something for bites and stings if you're going into woodland or near ponds.
- Give them a small rucksack to pack and carry – it will feel more like an adventure!
- Let them take a friend – they'll have someone their own age to share their adventure with.

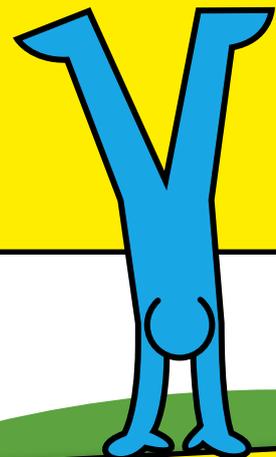
- Make it a treasure hunt or an I-Spy game.
- Get them walking to school – see the next page for more help on this.

And don't forget that babies can come too! It's great for their development to see new things and be outdoors, and pushing the pram is great exercise for you too.

## Walks with child appeal

Kids like places with lots of things to look at and places to climb over: dunes, trees, water and beaches (though be careful close to deep, unprotected water), unusual and odd buildings, transport like trains and boats, animals, famous landmarks and places connected to other things that interest them, like films, TV, pop music, books and sport.

They're usually less interested in straight paths, landscapes and views.



Don't forget about all the fun 'Walk4Life games' kids can do while they're out and about. Check them out [here](#).

# walking to school

There are so many fantastic reasons why kids should walk to school. But you might not know that there are benefits for you too...

## Why it's good for kids

- Walking to school is a great way to help kids towards their '60 active minutes' each day. Also, there could be quieter streets they can use which have fewer cars and less pollution. They might even be able to find a route through a park or other green space, which can help them feel calmer and happier too.
- Getting to school by foot helps with concentration. Walking burns off some of their excess energy and means they are better at settling down and focusing in lessons.
- Walking helps with road safety skills too. If they learn them when they're young, they're more likely to be safer walkers when they're older.
- If your child joins a walking bus, or is old enough to walk to school with friends, they'll have more time in the day to make friends and feel comfortable around other people. And most teenagers, like all of us, need time to themselves – walking home can be a good time to relax and think about their day.

## Why it's good for you

- If you prefer to walk with your child to school, you'll be keeping active with them! And because it's much easier to know how long a journey on foot will take you, you'll probably be much less stressed than if you were sitting in a traffic jam.

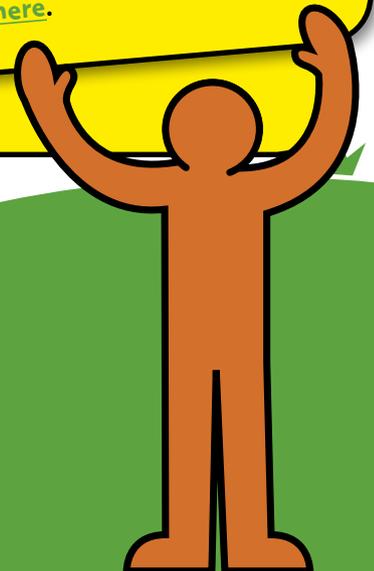
- Walking to school might even save you time. If your school has a walking bus (read more about these below), you could walk along only some days of the week and leave the kids with other trusted parents on the other days. And if your child is older, they could walk home by themselves or with friends – just think of all the time you'll save not waiting for them outside the school gates!
- Walking more will save you money on petrol and public transport. Simple!

## Walking buses

'Walking buses' are a great way of helping kids stay active and get to school safely. Kids get picked up along the way at set times and places along the route, and walk in a large group supervised by teachers or parents.

Find out if there's a walking bus for your school that goes through your area. You'll help reduce congestion, make it cleaner and safer for everyone, and avoid those traffic jams too!

Every year, around 2 million pupils join in with Living Streets' National Walk to School campaign – you can too! For lots of top tips on walking to school, visit the Walk to School website [here](#).



# when can kids walk on their own?

Parents often ask: “When is it OK for my kids to walk to school on their own?” And the simple answer is when they – and you – feel ready. As there’s no legal minimum age when a child is allowed to walk on their own, it just depends on how confident they are, where you live and how far away the school is.

You and your kids should talk about it and decide between you. By following our tips below, you’ll be able to choose the right time for them to get to school on their own.

- Let your kids decide when it’s safe to cross the road when you’re out together. Ask them what they know about crossing the road and ‘stranger danger’ so that they keep learning what they’re being taught about safety in school.
- Practice walking to school together and let them lead the way. Over time you could let them walk further ahead and start becoming more independent.
- Tell the kids that they can change their mind about walking to school on their own whenever they like. If they find they don’t like doing it, something changes on their journey (like roadworks making crossing more dangerous) or if they decide they want company while they walk, that’s fine.
- Let them know how you want them to behave on the way to and from school and praise them when they do well.
- They could start by just walking from school to home on their own so you’re there to meet them. That way you know they got home safely too.
- Don’t be afraid to follow them to set your mind at rest. But let them know you’ll be doing it and make sure they know why – it’s for your own peace of mind, not because you don’t trust them.
- They don’t have to walk alone. Could they walk with some local friends? If they can, make sure you set some ground rules with other parents – and be sure to all stick to them.

Make sure you have a look at the ‘Walk4Life games’ that kids can play while they’re out and about. Check them out [here](#).



# making your streets walker-friendly

If there are things in your neighbourhood that make walking difficult or not very pleasant – like unsafe crossings, overgrown hedges or rundown areas – there are some simple steps you can take that will make a huge difference to you, and the rest of the community.

- Write to your local councillor and explain the situation – they're there to help you! You could even invite them to come and walk with you, so they can see what the problem is.
- Visit [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com) where you can give details of problems like graffiti, fly tipping, broken paving slabs or poor street lighting and they will send on your concerns to the council.
- You could also see if there's a group that can help you – try a local Living Streets group or a Tenants and Residents Association – together you can make a much bigger impact.

