

## Walk Off The Weight

### 4 ways to get more fat-burning potential from your walking program.

*Spring is almost here and it is the perfect time for a little outdoor exercise and fitness. We also work close to a wonderful park and trail system—Terry Hershey Park.*

Walking can be a challenging, effective workout, but only when you're pushing yourself as hard as needed. All you need to know to make your walking program ultra-efficient is when and how to raise the intensity when your body demands it. These four tried-and-true methods can help you reach your fitness and weightloss goals.



- **Hold yourself in good standing.** Focusing on proper posture as you walk helps deliver more results by helping your body work more efficiently and effectively. The key is to keep your ears in line with your hips. Slouching your shoulders, bending your neck or tilting your hips too far back all destroy perfect posture, putting stress on certain muscles while inhibiting the lungs from expanding and delivering more oxygen throughout the body. Your head should be aligned with your spine, your eyes looking straight ahead at where you're heading.

- **Don't forget about your arms.** Moving your arms in sync with your feet not only helps you stay balanced and burn more calories but also acts as a form of speed control. The quicker you swing your arms, the quicker your pace will pick up. To keep yourself balanced and prevent taking wider steps than necessary, make sure your fists never swing back past your torso, or further forward than chest height; keep your arms parallel to your body. Drawing them across the body instead of alongside it can sometimes offset your balance. Your elbows should be bent 90 degrees throughout your stride.

- **Try talking to yourself.** If you're pushing along and have no problem carrying on a conversation, that means you're not taxing your cardiovascular system as much as you could be for aerobic benefit. To reach your personal aerobic threshold, you need to increase your intensity (either the speed at which you're walking or the conditions, such as choosing areas with a slightly higher incline). Once you reach a point where it becomes difficult to hold a conversation and exercise at the same time, then you'll be pushing yourself within your aerobic threshold.

- **Count your beats.** Count the beats for six seconds and then multiply that number by 10. You want to keep your heart beating between 60 and 75 percent of its maximum heart rate as you exercise. To find your maximum heart rate, subtract your age from 220. Next, multiply that number by 0.6 and 0.75. These

are the two numbers between which you want to keep your heart rate to stay within your aerobic zone. For example, if you're 30 years old, you would multiply 190 (220 minus 30 equals 190) by 0.6 and .75. The results would be 114 and 142.5.

Here are some great web resources to compliment your outdoor exercise:

**Terry Hershey Park** ( <http://www.pct3.hctx.net/parks/terryhershey.aspx> ) -- this site has maps, rules and details about our nearest and dearest park.

**USATF website** ( <http://www.usatf.org/routes/map/> ) --this site has a wonderful mapping tool, which allows you to trace a walking or running route and find out exact mileage. It uses regular and actual satellite maps. You can even see the dirt trails along the bayou. Give it a look!