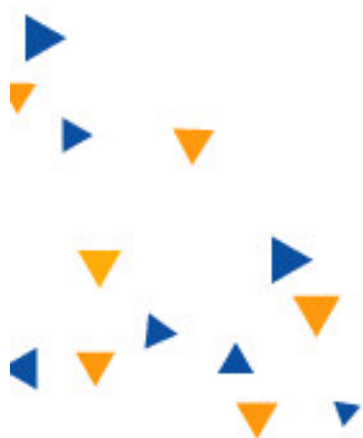




A beginning walking
and wellness guide
for Puget Sound older adults



*It's never too late
to get physically fit!*



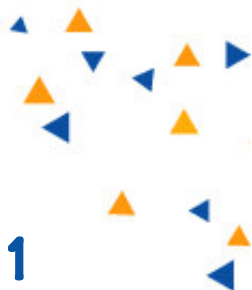
Get moving with *Sound Steps*!

This booklet introduces you to Sound Steps, an easy and fun way for older adults in the Puget Sound area to begin and sustain a physical activity program. Even if you've been a couch potato your whole adult life, Sound Steps can get you moving in the right direction!

Physical fitness isn't just kid stuff

A recent U.S. Surgeon General's report brought together a wealth of research on the benefits of physical activity for older adults. The report noted:

- People who are usually inactive can significantly improve their health and well-being by becoming even moderately active on a regular basis.
- Physical activity doesn't have to be strenuous to benefit your health.
- You can benefit even more by increasing the length of time, frequency and intensity of your exercise.



- Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity, for at least 10 minutes at a time, five days a week.

Why walk?



Walking is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to exercise. Walking regularly can:

- Reduce your risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer and high blood pressure



- Help control your weight by burning calories, decreasing appetite and improving digestion
 - Maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints
 - Lower high blood pressure
 - Lessen arthritis pain, stiffness and muscle aches
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- Ease stress and anxiety
 - Improve mental alertness, memory, reaction time and concentration
 - Help you sleep more soundly
 - Perk up your mood

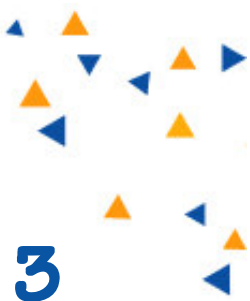




Set your sights on success

It doesn't take a lot of preparation or expensive equipment to begin walking. Follow these simple steps to increase your chances of sticking with your walking routine and exercising without injury.

- **Check with your doctor.** Few physical conditions stand in the way of being able to take regular walks, but it's wise to get advice from your doctor before making a big change in your physical activity. Ask about exercise intensity and how to best avoid injury.
- **Warm up and stretch.** Before you start walking, stretch the muscles in your calves, hamstrings (back thighs) and quadriceps (front thighs). Hold each stretch for about 20 seconds. Walk slowly or march in place for at least 5 minutes before you start more intense activity.
- **Buy good walking shoes.** Unlike sneakers or tennis shoes, walking shoes are specially designed for the activity. They have heavy, flexible soles; a firm and slightly raised heel; wide arch support; and sturdy uppers of leather or mesh fabric. For proper fit, allow a thumb's width between the tip of the shoe and the end of your longest toe.



- **Wear loose-fitting, layered clothing.** You can add or remove layers to adapt to changing temperatures.
- **Take it slowly.** People who have been inactive for a long time may only be able to walk a block or two at first. That's OK! You may want to start by walking for short periods of time – 5 or 10 minutes – a couple times a day.

Sound health through Sound Steps



You're ready to go! The Sound Steps concept combines group support with the flexibility of walking when and where you'd like. Here's how it works:

- **Go on group walks with other older adults.** Having a regular time to walk with others can help keep you motivated. Local senior centers, parks and community centers often schedule regular walks.
- **Ask friends or family members to join you.** If you walk alone, be sure to choose a safe location.
- **Keep track of your activity.** Post a wall calendar where you'll see it every day and use it to record the length of time you walk each day. Some people like to use step-counters or pedometers to also track distance. Be creative! Use bright colored markers or stars so your calendar will help motivate you and be a constant reminder of your progress.
- **Set realistic goals.** Build slowly toward a goal of walking for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Increase your activity from there if you feel comfortable, but don't overdo it.



- **Reward yourself!** Treat yourself to a special outing, a new pair of walking shorts or a bouquet of flowers when you take a major step toward your goal. Walking regularly is more important than big increases in distance or time.



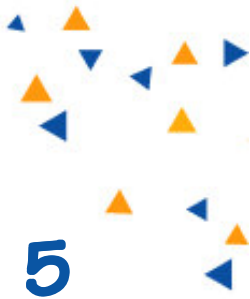


More tips for safety and fitness

- **Choose well-lighted walking routes.** Avoid heavy traffic. Your neighborhood parks are usually great choices.
- **Always carry identification and emergency contact information.** If your walking clothes don't have pockets, pin the information to your shirt.
- **Drink plenty of water every day, especially before and after you walk.** Don't wait until you feel thirsty.



- **Avoid harmful sun exposure.** Wear sunglasses and a hat. Use sunscreen, even on cloudy days.
- **Take care of your feet.** Cut your toenails straight across. Wash your feet daily and dry them well; use lotion. Avoid more serious injuries by quickly taking care of minor problems like blisters, corns, calluses or athlete's foot.





- **Pay attention to your pain.** It's common to feel a little soreness, especially when you first start. But serious muscle pain, neck or low-back pain, cramps or nausea can be signs of serious injuries. See your doctor if these persist.



- **Don't let bad weather prevent you from exercising.** Walk indoors at a shopping mall if you can't go outside.

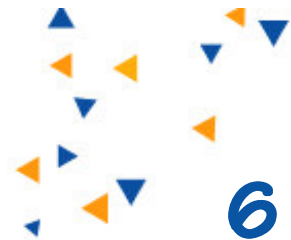


- **As you get more fit, add steps to your day in other ways.** Park in the space farthest from the grocery store entrance. Walk up a flight or two of stairs instead of taking the elevator. If your fitness level allows, take a mountain or beach hike with friends.

- **Consider expanding your exercise regimen.** Once you incorporate regular walking into your routine, think about adding activities for strength training, flexibility and balance. Check out exercise classes at a local senior center. For information on other organized physical fitness activities for older adults in the Puget Sound area, call 1-888-4ELDERS (1-888-435-3377).



*With Sound Steps, you are on the road to sound fitness.
Congratulations on beginning your walking program,
and good luck!*



About Sound Steps and the Healthy Aging Partnership

Sound Steps is an initiative of a unique organization called the Healthy Aging Partnership. Seattle Parks and Recreation Department, a member of the Partnership, also is a primary sponsor of Sound Steps.

The Healthy Aging Partnership is a coalition of more than 30 not-for-profit and public organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of older adults in the Puget Sound area. HAP promotes a free and confidential information and assistance line for seniors and people who care about them. Call 1-888-4ELDERS (1-888-435-3377) for answers to your questions about living a healthier life as an older adult.

HAP is generously supported by its partner agencies, which include Comprehensive Health Education Foundation, Public Health – Seattle & King County and the University of Washington Health Promotion Research Center. Visit the web site at www.4elders.org for more information.

