



HealthBreak

APRIL 2015

Walk Away from **Stress**



Sometimes life just seems unmanageable: deadlines, finances, relationship struggles, a sick child, a crashed hard drive... endless **STRESS!**

While stress is an unavoidable part of life, constant, elevated stress can lead to health problems. These can include sleep problems, aches and pains, intestinal problems, heart disease and even weight gain. Fortunately, there is a simple method for lowering your stress. It starts with putting one foot in front of the other.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, walking is a great way to lower stress and stay heart-healthy. It has been shown to reduce stress-related hormones in your blood. Walking improves your mood and mental outlook. Regular walking breaks provide a break from everyday pressures, allowing you to see things in a different light. It also reduces fatigue and increases energy levels.



Please visit excellusbcb.com for more information about lifestyle changes you can make to improve your health.

IF YOU'RE READY TO WALK AWAY FROM STRESS, HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- 1.** Set exact times each day for walking (after lunch, before a recurring meeting, etc.) It might be helpful to set a recurring alarm or other reminder to keep you “on your toes.”
- 2.** While any amount of walking is good for you, aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk walking each day. You can even divide it up (10 minutes, 3 times a day or 15 minutes twice a day).
- 3.** Weather permitting, do your walking outside. The extra sunlight and fresh air can provide a boost to your mood and increase your alertness.
- 4.** Having social support can help eliminate stress too. Consider walking with a friend, co-worker or family member. You're also less likely to talk yourself out of taking a walk break if someone else is counting on you for company.
- 5.** Alternatively, you may wish to walk alone. This “me time” can be a great opportunity to sort through your thoughts and perhaps gain a different perspective on your stressors.
- 6.** Listen to music that makes you happy when you're walking. Music provides an escape from the stress of the day, while improving your mood.

Finally, remember that you don't have to be a marathon runner to enjoy the stress-relieving benefits of walking. A comfortable stroll can work wonders for your heart and your head.



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