

# GUIDELINES FOR HEART HEALTHY EXERCISE\*

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## Exercise Basics

Research has shown that even 20 to 30 minutes of walking (about 1 to 1.5 miles) three times a week is beneficial for the heart and overall health. That amount of walking done daily is even better. The optimal level for preventing and reversing heart disease is 40 to 60 minutes of walking daily (about 2 to 4 miles). With any exercise program, it is best to begin slowly, gradually increasing to a level that can be sustained for the long term. Stretching is an important part of daily exercise and should be done only after warming up with moderate paced exercise for 5 to 10 minutes, not before.

Walking is one of the best all around forms of exercise and is better for joint health than running, especially among middle aged and older persons. If walking is problematic or other forms of exercise are preferable for variety, health, or safety reasons, walking laps in a pool, water aerobics, swimming, cycling, dancing, or using a recumbent bicycle are excellent choices. The recommended time for exercising in a pool is roughly equivalent to walking because of the increased resistance of the water. For those beginning a pool exercise program, again it is important to increase time and difficulty of workouts gradually. Water exercises can be deceptively strenuous and it is important to not overdo in the early stages.

## Some Health Benefits of Exercise:

- Aerobic heart & lung conditioning
- Lower blood pressure
- Burn calories
- Raise “good” HDL Cholesterol
- Tone muscles
- Strengthens bones
- Reduce stress
- Improve mood
- Better sleep

## Walking Tidbits

Compared with brisk walking, running is more stressful on joints and does not offer much more advantage in burning calories. While varying by body weight, running on level surfaces for 30 minutes burns an average of 275 to 300 calories. Whereas, walking at a brisk pace on level surfaces burns an average of 165 calories, on a slight incline 225 calories, and on hilly trails up to about 350 calories.

Walking equipment includes lightweight and supportive shoes, comfortable seasonal clothing, and, if needed, a small pack for carrying water and healthy snacks on longer walks and hikes. For walking at dusk or dawn, reflectors or small flashing LED lights are recommended. Some people find it helpful to use walking poles, which bring the upper body into action and can help with balance.

Excerpts from **HEARTS FOR GOD®**, Bisgrove, Eilene, Durham, NC:  
New Earth Visions, 2008.

Warming up should be done by walking at a slow to moderate pace for 5 to 10 minutes. For long walks, warm-up can be followed with gentle stretches prior to the main section of the walk. Cooling down by slowing pace for the last 5 to 10 minutes of the walk is advised.

### **Things to Remember:**

Check with a doctor before starting an exercise program

Don't walk right after large meal

Drink plenty of water

Don't get over heated or chilled

Keep an upright, but relaxed posture

Breathe deeply and regularly

Take even and smooth strides

Slow down or rest if you have pain

Walk in safe places and with friends

**If having chest pain or dizzy—Stop, Rest, Check with a doctor!**

### **Travel in Biblical Times**

In Biblical times, people walked just about every place that they went. While engaged in daily activities, people walked between 3 to 10 miles. Other means of travel were by donkey or mule back, or in a small wagon pulled by a donkey. According to archaeological evidence, camels had not yet been domesticated in Abraham and Sarah's day (approximately 2000 B.C.). Donkeys would have been used for carrying packs and occasionally for riding. Even by Jesus' time, Israelites rarely rode camels, largely because Levitical purity laws considered camels to be unclean animals.

People usually traveled in groups, often for protection because there were bandits and wild animals along the roads. Lions, wolves, vipers, scorpions, as well as, dust storms and insect plagues were some of the potential dangers faced by travelers. The roads were also narrow, very rocky and rugged in places. People wore leather sandals to protect their feet. If enough water was available, foot washing was a welcome refresher at the end of a long day's journey.

The average day's journey was about 15 to 18 miles. People carried food and water with them and stopped at villages, oases, and inns (where they existed) along the way to stock up and to rest. Whole grain breads and cereals, dried fruits and roots, nuts, and dried fish were common foods for journeys. The difficulty and dangers of traveling in rugged conditions were the basis for the gracious hospitality people extended toward guests and traveling strangers.

### **Making the Journey**

The goals for walking or some other form of exercise for week one depend on your previous exercise level.

**Beginning Walker** - three 20-minute exercise sessions (about 3 miles).

**Intermediate Walker** - 120 minutes in 3 to 6 exercise sessions (about 6 miles).

**Seasoned Walker** - 180 minutes in 3 to 6 exercise sessions (about 9 miles).

Use a journal to keep track of your exercise times and distances, along with notes on your progress, insights, reflections, and any challenges you encounter.

**!!! Remember - If you are participating in a cardiovascular rehabilitation program, continue the program. Ask how you can use Hearts for God with your rehab !!!**

### **Prayer for the Journey**

Lord, you call us forth on journeys each day. Some are measured in miles, some in prayers, friendships, and service, some in difficulties and blessings. As we follow you into new places and situations, help us accept change, to move, grow, and bloom where we are planted. In the Name of Jesus Christ we pray. **Amen**

### **Hymn for the Journey**

“Jesus Calls Us” UMH # 398

### **Thoughts for Reflection**

† Walking can be a great time to sing a hymn or hum a tune. Try memorizing a verse of “Jesus Calls Us” and sing or hum it as you walk. Remember to breathe deeply and slowly.

† Imagine that you are walking with Abraham and Sarah along dramatic new terrain. Enhance these images by following their journey in the video *Walking the Bible* (minutes 25 to 37). Borrow the book by the same name and author from a local library and enjoy the photos and narrative.

† A visitation from an archangel is way beyond our normal realm of experience. We are in awe of Mary’s amazing courage and faith. Ask God to help you find ways to be a faithful servant. While seeming small compared with angels and bearing the Son of God, your exercise program may be exactly what God calls you to do!

† Draw a radius from your house for the average day’s journey in Biblical times (15 to 18 miles). Could you imagine walking that far if you had to? This comparison will give perspective to your exercise program.

### **A Word from Wesley**

John Wesley believed that physical health was a core part of our overall spiritual health. He worked tirelessly to make medicine, healing remedies, and health advice available, particularly for the poor. He believed in the importance of exercise, as attested in the following quote from the *The Primitive Physic*, a pocket-sized book of common 18th century remedies, which he compiled and published for his preachers to carry with them and share with parishoners:

*“The power of exercise, both to preserve and restore health, is greater than can well be conceived: especially in those who add temperance thereto;*

*....Walking is the best exercise for those who able to bear it... The open air, when weather is fair, contributes much to the benefit of exercise.”*

**Wesley, John, *The Primitive Physic*, Introduction, London: Paramore, 1798.**

# RESOURCES

## Biblical Atlases, Lifestyle, and Walking Tours

Dowley, Tim, *The Student Bible Atlas*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1996.

Feiler, Bruce, *Walking the Bible: A Journey By Land Through the Five Books of Moses*, William Morrow Pub., 2001.

Feiler, Bruce, *Walking the Bible: An Illustrated Journey For Kids Through the Greatest Stories Ever Told*, HarperTrophy Pub., 2005.

*The HarperCollins Concise Atlas of the Bible*, San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1997.

Isbouts, Jean-Pierre, *The Biblical World Atlas*, Washington, DC, National Geographic, 2007.

King, Philip and Stager, Lawrence, *Life in Biblical Israel*, Louisville, KY; Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Vamosh, Miriam, *Daily Life at the Time of Jesus*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

## Videos / DVDs, Films

Feiler, Bruce, *Walking the Bible: A Journey By Land Through the Five Books of Moses*, PBS Special, [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org).

*Gallop Through the Gospels*, Gateway Films, [www.visionvideo.com](http://www.visionvideo.com).

The 2006 film "Nativity" has excellent depictions of daily life and travel in Biblical times.

*Where Jesus Walked*, Biblical Archaeology Society, [www.biblicalarchaeology.org](http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org).

*Where Jesus Walked*, Gateway Films, [www.visionvideo.com](http://www.visionvideo.com).

## Cardiovascular Health

American Heart Association: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

Centers for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov/HeartDisease](http://www.cdc.gov/HeartDisease).

Harvard Heart Disease Risk: [www.yourdiseaserisk.harvard.edu/hccpquiz](http://www.yourdiseaserisk.harvard.edu/hccpquiz).

Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com).

National Institutes of Health, Cholesterol: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd).

Ornish, D. et al., "Can Lifestyle changes Reverse Coronary Heart Disease?", *Lancet*, Vol. 336 (1990) pp.129-133.

Physicians' Committee for Responsible Medicine, *Preventing and Reversing Heart Disease*, [www.pcrm.org](http://www.pcrm.org).

Rosati K. and Rosati R., *The Rice Diet Solution*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

Rosati, Kitty, *Heal Your Heart*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

## Exercise / Healthy Movement / Breathing

American Heart Association, *The Healthy Heart Walking Book*, New York: MacMillan, 1995., [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

Anandi, J., *Flowing Gentle Path Yoga*, (DVDs and CDs) [www.ricedietstore.org](http://www.ricedietstore.org).

"Breathing for Health," [www.healingdaily.com](http://www.healingdaily.com).

"Breathing to Reduce Stress," Better Health Channel, [www.betterhealth.vic.gov](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov).