

# Healthy Lifestyles UK

## Walking To Promote Healthy Lifestyles UK

Many people walk as a hobby, and in our post-industrial age it is often enjoyed as one of the best forms of exercise and helps promote healthy lifestyles.

Fitness walkers and others may use a pedometer to count their steps. The types of walking include bushwalking, racewalking, weight-walking, hillwalking, volksmarching, Nordic walking and hiking on long-distance paths. Sometimes people prefer to walk indoors using a treadmill. In some countries walking as a hobby is known as hiking (the typical North American term), rambling (a somewhat dated British expression, but remaining in use because it is enshrined in the title of the important Ramblers' Association), or tramping. Hiking is a subtype of walking, generally used to mean walking in nature areas on specially designated routes or trails, as opposed to in urban environments; however, hiking can also refer to any long-distance walk. More obscure terms for walking include "to go by Marrow-bone stage", "to take one's daily constitutional", "to ride Shank's pony", "to ride Shank's mare", or "to go by Walker's bus." Among search and rescue responders, those responders who walk (rather than ride, drive, fly, climb, or sit in a communications trailer) often are known as "ground pounders".

The Walking the Way to Health Initiative is the largest volunteer led walking scheme in the United Kingdom. Volunteers are trained to lead free Health Walks from community venues such as libraries and GP surgeries. The scheme has trained over 35,000 volunteers and have over 500 schemes operating across the UK, with thousands of people walking every week.

Professionals working to increase the number of people walking more usually come from 6 sectors: health, transport, environment, schools, sport & recreation and urban design. A new organization called Walk England launched a web site on the 18th June 2008 to provide these professionals with evidence, advice and examples of success stories of how to encourage communities to walk more. The site has a social networking aspect to allow professionals and the public to ask questions, discuss, post news and events and communicate with others in their area about walking, as well as a 'walk now' option to find out what walks are available in each region.

The world's largest registration walking event is the International Four Days Nijmegen. The annual Labor Day walk on Mackinac Bridge draws over sixty thousand participants. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge walk annually draws over fifty thousand participants. Walks are often organized as charity events with walkers seeking sponsors to raise money for a specific cause. Charity walks range in length from two mile (3 km) or five km walks to as far as fifty miles (eighty km). The MS Challenge Walk is an example of a fifty mile walk which raises money to fight multiple sclerosis. The Oxfam Trailwalker is a one hundred km event.

Sheep walking along a road In Britain, the Ramblers' Association is the biggest organization that looks after the interests of walkers. A registered charity, it has 139 000 members. Regular, brisk cycling or walking can improve confidence, stamina, energy, weight control, life expectancy and reduce stress. It can also reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, strokes, diabetes, high blood pressure, bowel cancer and osteoporosis. Modern scientific studies have showed that walking, besides its physical benefits, is also beneficial for the mind &mdash; improving memory skills, learning ability, concentration and abstract reasoning, besides reducing stress and uplifting ones' spirits.