National Walking Day How-To Guide

National Walking Day is April 1. By committing to walk at least 30 minutes, you can get healthier and raise awareness about the importance of physical activity. On this day, millions of people throughout the United States will come together to take steps to live a healthier life for themselves, their families and their communities.

You can celebrate the day in the workplace, at schools, in neighborhood walking groups and clubs and communities. This guide includes instructions, tips and resources to help you promote and celebrate National Walking Day.

What You Will Find in this Guide:

• Getting Started
• How to Participate
• Communication Templates
• Resources

Your free online toolkit includes many more resources and materials:

• Four Weeks of Healthy Living Tips
• Four Weeks of Healthy Living Articles
• Four-Week Intermediate Walking Plan
• Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge Tracker
• Posters and Graphics
• Warm-Weather Fitness Guide
• Cold-Weather Fitness Guide
Getting Started

National Walking Day is a day to get active and kick off healthy lifestyles in your community, in your circle of friends or with your family. It’s easy to get started with this guide, plus our great promotional resources and health information. Start here with our step-by-step action plan.

Step 1: Choose your date

National Walking Day is April 1, but you can set a different date if it works better for you. Your Walking Day can be any day! Once you choose a day, get it on the calendar right away, and use one of our communication templates to help build awareness. You can also start sending daily tips, stretches and a walking plan to get everyone moving.

Step 2: Plan your event

We have lots of great ideas from others who have celebrated National Walking Day with us. Take a look at the event ideas in this guide, or come up with your own. Use the checklist in this guide to make sure you’ve covered all the details — from food to emails to healthy living tips.

Step 3: Spread the word

Use email, social media, posters and flyers to help build awareness. Invite family and friends to participate with you. Send or post our health tips, articles and walking plan to get everyone moving. You can download free materials from the Heart.org/NationalWalkingDay website.

Step 4: Celebrate!

Take a breath, and start walking. Today is the day you’ll pledge to live a longer, stronger and healthier life.
How to Participate

National Walking Day is a day to kick off a commitment to healthy living. Below is a list of ideas you can use before, during and after the day.

Before the Big Day

Building excitement is important. There are many ways to do this including:

- Send emails. Use one of our email templates or get creative and make your own.
- Use social media to increase awareness and excitement.
- Set a goal or make a pledge to commit to a healthier lifestyle. Post or display your goal as a daily reminder of your healthy living commitment. Incorporate this pledge into the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge. (See After the Event for more details.)
- Challenge your community, friends and family to join you and set their own goals.

On National Walking Day

- Wear sneakers. Wearing comfortable shoes will encourage you to walk more.
- Host a walk. Set a time to lead your group on a 30-minute walk. This could be indoors or outdoors. Map a Walking Path at StartWalkingNow.org.
- Kick off the day with a rally. Invite a guest speaker to speak about healthy living and physical activity. Announce the start of the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge. (See After the Event for more details.)
- Host a wellness fair. Host an education event for your community including:
  - An introduction to making healthy choices a personal priority through AHA’s Life’s Simple 7 and My Life Check assessment. Within a few minutes, participants will know how they’re doing with each one of Life’s Simple 7 measures. A personal heart score and life plan will help them create a personal action plan. Learn more at Heart.org/MyLifeCheck.
  - How-to activity seminar with a local fitness center to educate participants on physical activity topics like the proper way to stretch.
  - Visit from a registered dietitian nutritionist to talk about healthy eating and answer any questions.
  - Cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings from a local hospital or clinic.
  - Testimonial from a heart disease survivor who shares his or her experience.
How to Participate, Continued

After the Event
Healthy living doesn’t stop after one day. Use National Walking Day as a starting point and keep the momentum going by launching a four-week program for health. We’ve included everything you need to motivate your community — tips, articles, a walking plan and a tracker.

Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge
For the next four weeks encourage your participants to keep walking and living a healthy lifestyle. Your National Walking Day toolkit includes four weeks of tips, articles, a walking plan and a walking tracker.

- Daily Tips — Email or post to social media daily or weekly.
- Articles — Email or post to kick off each week.
- Intermediate Walking Plan — Send to participants at the beginning of the countdown. Use daily to work up to 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day.
- Walking Countdown Challenge Tracker — Give to participants and use daily to track progress.

Ways To Make It More Fun
- Make the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge a competition and kick it off on National Walking Day.
- Form a walking club using our tips and resources at Heart.org/WalkingClubs.
- Have a party or a picnic to celebrate after four weeks of health.
- Participate in the Heart Walk. Have fun and raise funds to save lives from two of the leading killers of Americans — heart disease and stroke. Find details for your local event at HeartWalk.org.

National Walking Day is where millions of Americans across the nation will take steps to a healthier life, but it’s also about having fun and creating camaraderie. Don’t forget to enjoy the day!
Community Announcement

Step by step, day after day, you walk to make progress. Every day we take thousands of steps to get where we need to go. Now we can take steps toward a healthier lifestyle and support the American Heart Association.

On Wednesday, April 1, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] will join the American Heart Association in celebrating National Walking Day. It’s a day to challenge ourselves and our nation to get heart healthy and fit. We’ll have several events on this day including:

- [INSERT EVENT]
- [INSERT EVENT]

Mark your calendars now. More details will be coming soon!

Second Community Announcement

Don’t forget: On Wednesday April 1, we’ll be celebrating National Walking Day with the American Heart Association. Physical inactivity is a huge national problem. Eighty percent of adults in America don’t get enough physical activity. And it means we’re at greater risk for heart disease, stroke and other blood vessel diseases. But we’re not going to take it sitting down.

On April 1, we’ll join millions of Americans as they pledge to live a healthier lifestyle and get physically active. Here’s what you can do to join in the celebration:

- Show your support and wear sneakers to school or work on April 1.
- Join our rally at [INSERT TIME] at [INSERT LOCATION] and pledge to live a healthier lifestyle!
- Since you’ll be wearing your sneakers, we challenge you to take a 30-minute walk on April 1 — and keep it up! Start a habit of daily walking at school, work or home.
- Visit Heart.org/Walking and use the American Heart Association’s free tips and tools to stay motivated on your walking program.

Don’t forget to mark your calendar for [INSERT TIME] on April 1 to join us in our celebration [INSERT LOCATION].

See you there!
Communication Templates, Continued

Day Before Community Event

Don’t forget: Tomorrow is our National Walking Day celebration! Be sure to join us for a fun rally and a short walk. Most of all, don’t forget to wear your sneakers! Meet us at [INSERT LOCATION] tomorrow at [INSERT TIME].

Don’t be late!

After Community Event

Thanks to everyone who joined us to celebrate National Walking Day. We had a great turnout and a lot of commitment to get healthy and get fit. [ADD MORE HERE IF DESIRED, e.g., announcement of winners, pledges, etc.]

But we can’t get healthy in one day. So we’re launching a Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge, courtesy of the American Heart Association. Each week for the next four weeks, we’ll be sending you everything you need to complete the challenge. You’ll get:

• Daily health tips
• Great weekly articles that will help guide you through the ups and downs of getting healthy
• A walking plan for intermediate walkers who want to improve their health and increase their energy

[INSERT FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN HEART WALK]

Don’t forget that part of fighting heart disease, the nation’s number one killer, is helping the American Heart Association fund lifesaving research. We can do that by spreading the word and raising funds for the [INSERT CITY NAME] Heart Walk on [INSERT DATE].

Thanks and let’s get walking!

[IF APPLICABLE, INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT ANOTHER RALLY OR EVENT AT THE END OF THE FOUR WEEKS]

Individual Announcement

Step by step, day after day, you walk to make progress. Every day we take thousands of steps to get where we need to go. Now we can take steps toward a healthier lifestyle and support the American Heart Association.

On Wednesday, April 1, I will join the American Heart Association in celebrating National Walking Day. It’s a day to challenge ourselves and our nation to get heart healthy and fit. Will you join me?

Find out more at Heart.org/NationalWalkingDay.
Communication Templates, Continued

Individual Walking Countdown Challenge Announcement

Thanks to everyone who joined me to celebrate National Walking Day. We can’t get healthy in one day. So I’m launching a Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge, courtesy of the American Heart Association.

Will you join me? I’ll share:

• Daily healthy living tips
• Great weekly articles that will keep us motivated through the ups and downs of getting healthy
• A walking plan for intermediate walkers to help us work up to 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day

Don’t forget that part of fighting heart disease and stroke is helping the American Heart Association fund lifesaving research. We can do that by spreading the word and raising funds for the [INSERT CITY NAME] Heart Walk on [INSERT DATE].

Thanks and let’s get walking!

Email/Social Media Tips

• Use the countdown theme by spelling out how many days are left, e.g., 30 days.
• Use the countdown in reverse by announcing which day of the countdown you’re on, e.g., Day One, Day Two.
• Ask for feedback on the tips you’re sending. For example, if you provide a tip on healthy substitutions, ask others to share their tips.
• Don’t overwhelm people with too many messages. If you don’t want to send daily emails, use social media or send one email a week with five daily tips, walking plan for the week and the article.
• Use the hashtag #WalkingDay to join the national conversation!
Resources

The American Heart Association has many resources to help people be more active and live healthier. Visit Heart.org/HealthyLiving often to find the latest information on physical activity, healthy eating, healthier kids and more.

Find information about your local Heart Walk event at HeartWalk.org.

Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter. Sign up for our My Heart. My Life. and Heart At Work e-newsletters.

Thank you from the American Heart Association for taking the first step toward a longer, healthier life by participating in National Walking Day. Be sure to mark your calendar now to participate in National Eating Healthy Day on the first Wednesday in November!