

# Exercise

## How to power walk

Understanding how to get the most out of your walk



- Feet first
- Stride out
- Don't swing your hips
- Use your arms
- Get your pace right

For walking to be of benefit to your health it really needs to be a brisk walk. This means walking at an intensity that makes you:

- Breathe a little faster
- Feel warmer
- Have a slightly faster heart beat
- Sweat slightly

The correct walking speed depends on a person's gender, age and fitness. You need to build up your level of activity gradually. Brisk walking is best, but for sedentary people gentle strolling is a good start.

### Tips for getting the most out of a brisk walk

These are the techniques used in power walking – which is just brisk walking dressed up to sound good!

**Think 'feet first'** – this means walk through your whole foot. Each time the foot hits the ground be aware of walking through the heel, arch of the foot and pushing off the toes, so you create a stride rather than a step.

**Don't swing your hips** - keep them stabilised. Imagine you have a glass of wine on each hip and you have to keep them full as you walk. To do this you will need to draw up and in through your tummy muscles. This will also help improve your posture and help flatten your tummy.

**Don't walk with rounded shoulders** - The best way to do this is to make as much distance as possible between your shoulders and your ear lobes – this helps you look leaner and taller and also helps to align your spine correctly, reducing stiffness and soreness.

**Your speed when walking actually comes from your arms** - To speed up try swinging your arms faster, your legs will automatically follow and move faster too.

Walking at the right pace doesn't mean walking at a break neck speed. Find your own optimum pace that you are comfortable with and which gets you breathing a little bit harder and feeling a little bit warmer. As you progress and get used to the time you spend walking, then increase your pace - always keep it feeling comfortable; but don't be afraid to stretch yourself.

