



Skills to boost your everyday walking

WalkWithMe 2018 Workshop

There's an art to walking well. The truth is that whilst we were all born to walk, very few of us have given much thought to exactly how. This has resulted in myriad problems due to poor functioning muscles and muscle firing sequencing.

Here are six skills which will **improve your everyday walking**, making it more efficient, energetic, and enjoyable.

1. Posture - Walk Tall

The most important aspect of successful walking is posture. With good posture you will be able to walk further, faster and longer without feeling the strain. Here's what to remember:

- Lengthen your spine
- Lift the weight of your head off your shoulders (think puppet on a string)
- Chin in line with the ground
- Shoulders wide – down and back
- Maximise the gap between your hip bone and your rib cage
- Tummy engaged (but not over tightened)
- Weight evenly centred over your feet.

2. Active feet

Getting active with your feet has huge benefits. Not only will you tone your legs, you will also:

- burn more calories
- give your bum a powerful workout
- walk faster
- improve your circulation.

The key is the heel/toe roll. Your foot should roll through from the heel, over the foot arch to the ball of your foot and ultimately your toes. The image we often use is of squeezing a lemon under your foot at each stride. The action should be fluid: focus on keeping your foot as soft and pliable as possible. In particular, don't slam your foot down on the point of your heel and force the motion through to push off with your toes. Keep it soft and subtle. Finally, remember to spread your toes wide, like a duck's webbed feet, and push off using them evenly.

3. Use your arms

By swinging your arms actively you'll work your upper body, increase your power and speed and improve your circulation. The swing should come from your shoulder and be a comfortable forwards/backwards motion. If you want to power walk then bend your elbows at roughly 90 degrees, gently cup your hands and pump your arms forwards and backwards. Don't cross your arms over the mid line of your body though and the hands shouldn't come above the shoulders.

Actively swinging your arms will also greatly enhance the efficiency of your body's **lymphatic system** which helps to protect against infection and disease. We have clusters of lymph nodes all over our body including under our armpits and the arm swing action in combination with good breathing (chest lifted, engaging your diaphragm to breath) helps with lymph drainage.

4. Rotate – Think reverse catwalk!

Gently rotating your upper body whilst walking will help strengthen the muscles supporting your spine and boost back health generally. A lot of people find this movement tricky though so a top tip is to imagine you are posting your shoulder blade in your opposite back trouser pocket each time you swing your arm back. Remember also to keep your shoulders wide and your neck and shoulders relaxed.

5. Lean

If you lean into your walk you will walk faster and increase your core workout. The trick is to lean from your ankles, not your waist. Lean forwards as one active unit from ankle to head - aim is to move your centre of gravity over your toes. Hopefully you notice that you need to tighten your core stabilising muscles to keep your balance and the forwards shift of your momentum, making you want to step forwards.

6. Walking up and down hill

Finally, when going uphill keep your feet active (see above) and try to **avoid the common mistake of bending over at your waist**. Instead lean into the hill from your ankles. On the downhill slopes tighten your tummy muscles, soften your knees and lean slightly back into the slope so that your centre of gravity falls behind your kneecaps.

The next time you're out walking why not try putting all this into practice?

If you would like any further information or would like a walking or Nordic Walking class please do not hesitate to contact me:



Sam Pritchard
Fully accredited British Nordic
Walking instructor.

Tel: 07776 185058

 Samstix Nordic Walking.
sam@samstix.co.uk

I look forward to seeing you all at WalkWithMe on Sunday 13th May!