



# STEP BY STEP

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A community walking program  
for people with Parkinson's

## PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

WALKING LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

CELL PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

Step by Step is a program organized by Parkinson Society British Columbia and adapted with permission from the American Parkinson Disease Association, Wisconsin Chapter.

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*You are not alone. We are here to help.*

## WHAT IS STEP BY STEP?

Step by Step is a 12 week walking program aimed at improving physical fitness to combat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Walkers are encouraged to gradually increase the distance walked for a self-determined end goal distance. While walkers are encouraged to walk and track their own distances, group walks will be offered each week and led by a group leader. We hope that at the completion of the program, individuals will continue a regular exercise routine.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Before starting the program, walkers should record the amount of time it takes to walk a small, pre-set distance. This will be their baseline walking speed. This test should be measured again at the end of the 12 weeks, where walkers will hopefully see an improvement. Any pre-set outcome measure can be used, as long as it can be reproduced at the end of the program.

### Ideas for outcome measure:

- Time yourself walking from pole to pole.
- Time yourself walking across the living room.
- Time yourself walking around the block, or to the grocery store.

Start by setting a goal you are comfortable with and see as challenging. Think about a fitness goal you have for daily life. For example, you may want to be able to walk across the parking lot of your doctor's office, to the grocery store, or from your bedroom to the kitchen with greater ease. No matter how big or small the goal is, think about the walking distance and time required for you to reach the goal.

## GOAL TRACKER

Use this space to track your goals and outcomes. This test should measure the time you need to walk a set distance. Before starting Step by Step, note the results of your starting walk test below. Test yourself again at the end of the program.

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

START POINT: \_\_\_\_\_ END POINT: \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 1 TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

WEEK 12 TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

## WHY IS STEP COUNT NOT AS IMPORTANT?

Having a high step count does not necessarily mean a better walking pattern. For example, someone who freezes frequently or who shuffles when walking will get a higher step count than someone walking with a bigger stride length and better foot clearance. Therefore, it is more accurate to track distance and time for measurable outcomes related to fitness ability and endurance.

## PLANNING YOUR WALKS

We recommend setting a weekly plan if you struggle with motivation. Write down:

1. The day(s) of the week you'll walk
  2. The time of day you'll walk
  3. How many minutes you'll walk, and your target distance
- Where you will walk (location).

## BALANCE AND FALLING

You may have problems with balance and posture which, in turn, can affect your centre of gravity. If you walk with a shuffle or find that you begin walking normally and progress to shorter faster steps until you are almost running on the balls of your feet, there may be potential for a fall. Here are some suggestions for improving your safety:

- Use a walking aid if you feel you need a bit of support, or walk with a partner. *Beware of using a walking aid with severe tremors, as it may actually be more harmful than useful.*
- Make sure your feet are not too close together. Widen your stance to improve balance.
- Wear comfortable shoes. If you shuffle, avoid rubber or crepe soles.
- Stand as straight as you can, lift the feet high, and think about taking big steps to avoid catching toes on the changing ground surfaces (eg. curb to pavement or carpet to bare floor).
- If freezing, try to think about stomping the feet, or use visual targets like lines on the ground to help you take a step. You could also listen to music while walking (2/2 time).
- Consult a physiotherapist. They can assess your overall safety and mobility, as well as teach you what to do if you fall.

*If you fall, stay calm! Take a moment to check whether you are injured. If you are, stay where you are and call for help. If you are not injured, you can try getting up from the ground.*

## 10 TIPS FOR FITNESS WALKING

Walking is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to stay physically fit. It's also a versatile form of exercise that can be done indoors or outdoors, and you can tailor the intensity of your exercise. These tips can help you get the most from your workout.

1. Before starting, check with your doctor if you have a chronic medical condition or if you have had a recent injury. But don't assume that you aren't able to start walking if you do have medical issues. Various forms of exercise can help control PD progression and symptoms.
2. Invest in good shoes. Since these are the only expense and equipment you'll need, pay attention to the fit and quality of your shoes. Shoes should have good arch support and a slightly elevated stiff heel to prevent wobbling.
3. Always warm up by walking at a slow or normal walking pace for five minutes before picking up the tempo of your workout.
4. Pay attention to your heart rate and breathing. Walk at a pace that challenges you and elevates your heart rate, but don't overdo it. You should be able to talk and carry a conversation while you are exercising; if you can't, you may be working too hard.
5. Use good walking posture. Swing your arms. Keep your head up, back straight and think about lifting the feet slightly higher than normal to ensure ground clearance.
6. Walk with a partner, or bring a mobile phone with you to ensure safety if help is needed.
7. Be sure to carry water if you're walking long distances or are exercising in hot weather. Don't forget to wear a hat with a brim and apply sunscreen to exposed areas.
8. Bring your medications to ensure you take them on time. Or time your walks to match the times when your medication is most effective.
9. Vary your route if you're getting bored. Alternate routes on different days of the week. Many people walk with a buddy or in groups for support and motivation.
10. To increase your fitness, add a route with some hills or changes in terrain.





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