

Guidelines for the annual Steps to Health challenge

Five-week challenge

The Steps to Health challenge runs for five consecutive weeks.

Set up a team

Set up a team with your work colleagues of between two and 20.

Work with your team co-ordinator

Your team co-ordinator will register your team with our national project team. We will send your team co-ordinator this challenge information card for each person taking part.

Please use your own step counter

If possible use your own step counter from last year's challenge. You can also use a smart watch for example a Fitbit or a free app you can download to your phone.

Wear your step counter all the time

Wear your step counter throughout the day – before, during and after work. If you change your clothes during the day, don't forget to transfer your step counter!

Complete the physical activity questionnaire before starting

If you are new to walking or returning after illness or injury fill in the physical activity questionnaire, known as PAR-Q. This is on our website hse.ie/stepschallenge/ You don't need to share this with anyone. It will allow you to assess if you need to see your GP or work Occupational Health staff first.

Keep track of your steps

Record your daily step count on this challenge information card at the end of each day, for example:

- Monday 5,413 steps
- Tuesday 6,962
- Wednesday 7,103

Keep this challenge information card for the five-week programme and return it to the team co-ordinator at the end. Your team co-ordinator will record the total number of steps for the team (not yourself!) at the beginning and end of the Steps to Health challenge.

This will let us see how much progress has been made nationally.

Record your steps below:

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Mon					
Tues					
Wed					
Thurs					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					
Total					
Start Date			Finish Date		

More information is available on our website
hse.ie/stepschallenge
 or email stepstohealth@hse.ie

@hsesteps | #HSEstepschallenge
 web | getirelandactive.ie

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A guide for staff participating in the

Steps to Health challenge



Spread the word – tell colleagues how good walking makes you feel.

Any extra steps you take every day will be good for your health.



What is the Steps to Health challenge?

The Steps to Health challenge encourages you to walk and count your steps during a five-week period. Form a team of between two and 20 people. Nominate a team co-ordinator to link in with our national Steps to Health challenge project team.

Research tells us that we are more motivated and likely to take part in physical activity like the Steps to Health challenge when we do it with friends and colleagues. It is also a lot more fun and engaging when we get out and about with colleagues, friends and family.

You can accumulate your steps during the day by:

- taking the stairs instead of the lift
- parking your car as far as possible away from your workplace
- walking during your breaks
- walking when at home with your family and friends

Aim to walk 10,000 steps daily, which is equal to eight kilometres or five miles. If you are new to walking, start off with 10 minutes at a time. Build it up every day at your own pace to reach as many steps as you can.

You can use this guide for other challenges

This guide is written for staff taking part in our annual Steps to Health challenge. But you can also use it to do an individual steps challenge or to run a work team steps challenge at other times during the year.



How do I reach 10,000 steps daily?

Before you start the Steps to Health challenge, measure your daily steps using your:

- step counter
- smart watch for example a Fitbit
- a free app you can download to your phone



You will find out how many steps you do daily without trying to be more active. This is your starting point for the number of steps to build on during the challenge.

Start from your comfortable number of daily steps and build up gradually to 10,000 by adding on 300 to 500 each day. If you are not active at present (3,000 steps or less), it could take you at least three weeks to reach 10,000 steps daily.

If you are already fairly active (7,000 steps per day or more), it should take you about a week to reach 10,000 steps daily.

Can I improve my health by doing 10,000 steps daily?

Experts from across the world agree that by doing 10,000 steps daily you will improve your health and wellbeing. Research studies have found that by stepping out you can:

- have a stronger heart – decreasing your risk of heart disease like heart attacks and strokes by 50%
- have more stable blood sugar levels – reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes
- protect against some cancers, particularly colon and breast cancer
- have a healthier brain – increase your ability to do new tasks and protect your memory
- be happier, more energetic and sleep better

How do I use the step counter?

The step counter has a built-in pendulum which counts your steps as you walk. Put the step counter on your waistband between your navel and your hip. It should be parallel to the ground and not tilted to the side. Make sure it is set at 0 each day. Your co-ordinator can help you if you have any questions about using or wearing it.



Tips to help you reach the 10,000 steps

Park away from your destination

Park your car as far as possible from your destination – work, the school gate or shopping centre.

Walk a few bus stops

If you use the bus, get off one or two stops before your destination.

Add in extra steps

- Take the stairs instead of the lift; each flight is worth about 40 steps.
- At work, use the photocopier, kitchen or bathroom that is furthest away.
- Walk over and chat to a colleague rather than sending them an email.
- Walk while discussing work with a colleague or during a teleconference call if it is appropriate in your work environment.

Walk more when shopping

- If you are out shopping in a town, park in a central location and go from shop to shop and back to your car as necessary.
- In the supermarket, do an extra lap around an aisle before you go to the checkout.

Be prepared for a stroll

Keep a pair of runners in your car and you will have them handy whenever you have time spare, even if it's a five-minute stroll while waiting to pick someone up.

