



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 10 people, nominate a team co-ordinator, give your team a name and your team co-ordinator will register you on hse.ie/stepschallenge.

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.

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.

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.

New to walking?
Start off small and build up
your steps over time.

How do I build up my daily step count?

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

- smart watch – for example a Fitbit.
- free app you can download to your phone.
- In keeping with the HSE's Climate Change strategy we encourage staff to use their smartphones apps and devices as much as possible. Re-use last years Step counter if possible. If you then need a step counter your team co-ordinator can order one for you when registering your team.

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.

You can accumulate your steps during the day by:

- taking the stairs instead of the lift
- walking up and down the stairs a few times
- walking during your breaks
- walking with your family or friends. Visit irishtrails.ie to find some lovely walking routes near you.

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 found that walking briskly can help:

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



Tips to help you reach the 10,000 steps

Live near the beach?

If you are lucky enough to live close to the sea, try a walk collecting some nice pebbles or perhaps collect 3 pieces of plastic from the shore and recycle them.

Guided walking tours

Perhaps you live in a big town or city, which has a guided walk you could take? Increase your steps while spotting some nice buildings or routes that are new to you.

Working from home

If you are working from home, try and get out for a walk either before or after work or take a fast, short walk during your breaks.

Be prepared

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

Every move counts

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



More information: hse.ie/stepschallenge or email: stepstohealth@hse.ie
Twitter @hsehealthW | #HSEstepschallenge