

RUNNING AND WALKING 101

An essential component of the Mediterranean lifestyle that leads to desirable health outcomes is physical activity. The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes per day of moderate exercise 5 days per week for heart health. Walking and running are excellent cardio workouts and can be considered moderate or rigorous, depending on the speed and incline. Many claim they find clarity of mind while running or walking long distances, while others like to just get a quick run or power-walk in to meet the cardio recommendations and get their heart pumping before the rest of their work-out.

If you are new to running or walking for exercise and are looking for a place to start, you've come to the right place.

Before getting started:

1. **Buy the right shoes.** Test them out in the store and wear them around the house before breaking them in on the road to be sure they are comfortable.
2. **Make a plan.** Come up with a goal for yourself to start, whether that be running/walking 1 mile or 10 miles, or keeping pace for 5 minutes or 30 minutes. Try our cardio challenge to figure out how to slowly increase your time and distance.

When starting to run/walk:

1. **Warm up and cool down.** This includes stretching before and after as well as starting and ending with a warm-up walk.
2. **Breathe.** In through the nose and out through the mouth, and keep your breathing on rhythm with your pace.
3. **Pay attention to your form.** As you're getting started, make sure to keep your shoulders pulled back and down, your head up, and your core pulled in. Practicing this posture will help make it easier to keep correct form as you progress.
4. **Plan your meals and snacks.** This matters most if you are planning more vigorous exercise. If exercising first thing in the morning, eat a small carbohydrate-rich snack, such as a granola bar, and hydrate with water. After your workout, eat complex carbohydrates and protein, such as Greek yogurt and berries or chia seed pudding. If working out in the afternoon/evening, eat a substantial lunch a few hours before, such as a grilled chicken Greek salad or grilled salmon grain bowl, and drink water. After your workout, rehydrate with water and consume dinner within a few hours post workout. If your mealtime will be delayed, eat a snack of carbohydrates and protein to restore energy and help build muscle, such as trail mix, pita with hummus, or string cheese and an apple. Water is the best beverage for hydration, unless you are working out for over an hour at high intensity, then consider a sports drink.
5. **Track your progress.** You may not know how much you've improved without keeping track of things such as your distance, time, speed, posture, pace, breathing, and enjoyment. Be proud of yourself every step of the way, because any effort you make is more than you would have done if you hadn't tried!