

[IMAGE]

One Step at a Time

Traveling two miles may not seem like a big deal to the driver of an automobile or a bicyclist, but for many women at risk for diabetes, walking a few extra miles can mean something significant: years of life gained.

Most sedentary people take between 4,000-6,000 steps per day. For people who are overweight and/or suffer from diabetes, that number can be even lower - and more difficult to achieve. In this eight-week study, 18 women at risk for diabetes walked increasing distances, beginning at approximately 5,000 steps for the first four "control" weeks, then progressing to more than 9,000 steps, counted by pedometers.

The near-10,000-step goal is consistent with exercise guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine. By increasing their steps taken daily by 85 percent, (close to two miles) without altering their diets, the women saw improvements in glucose (blood sugar) tolerance and a surprising decrease in resting blood pressure. (When the body cannot utilize glucose efficiently, diabetes results.)

There are probably several times that you drive somewhere, when you actually could walk. When you're about to jump in that car, think about the 10,000-steps rule, put those keys in your pocket, and start walking toward good health!

Reference:

Swartz AM, et al. Increasing daily walking improves glucose tolerance in overweight women. *Preventive Medicine* 2003;37(4), pp. 356-362.

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