

Walking As A Therapeutic Intervention

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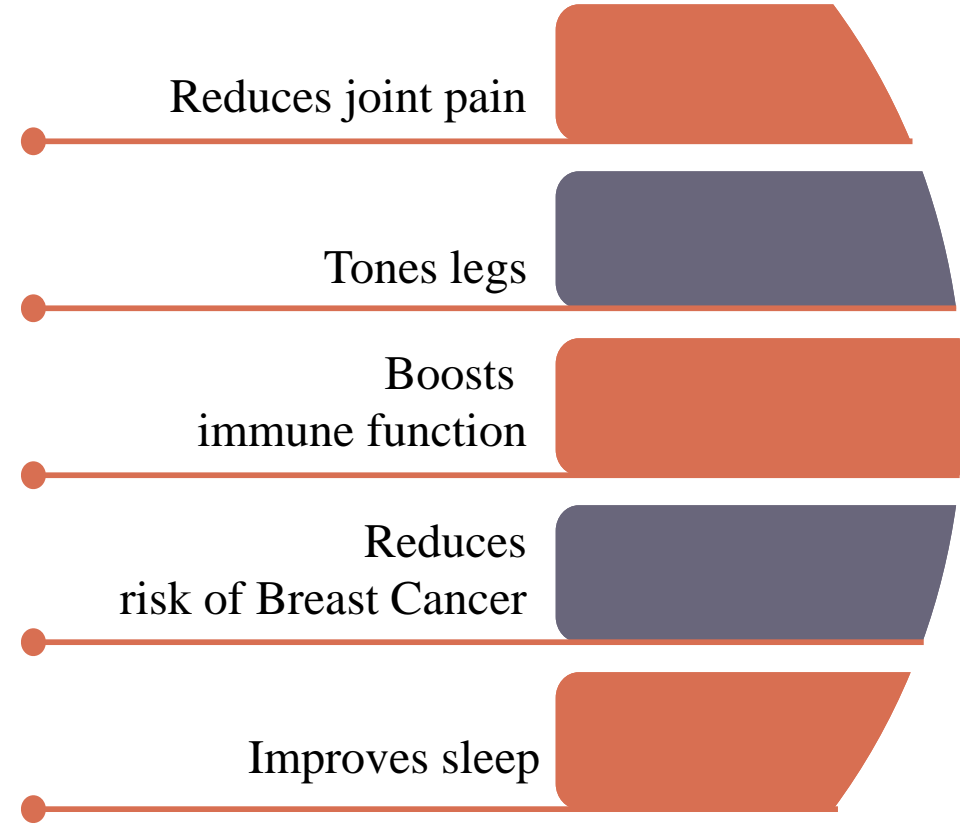
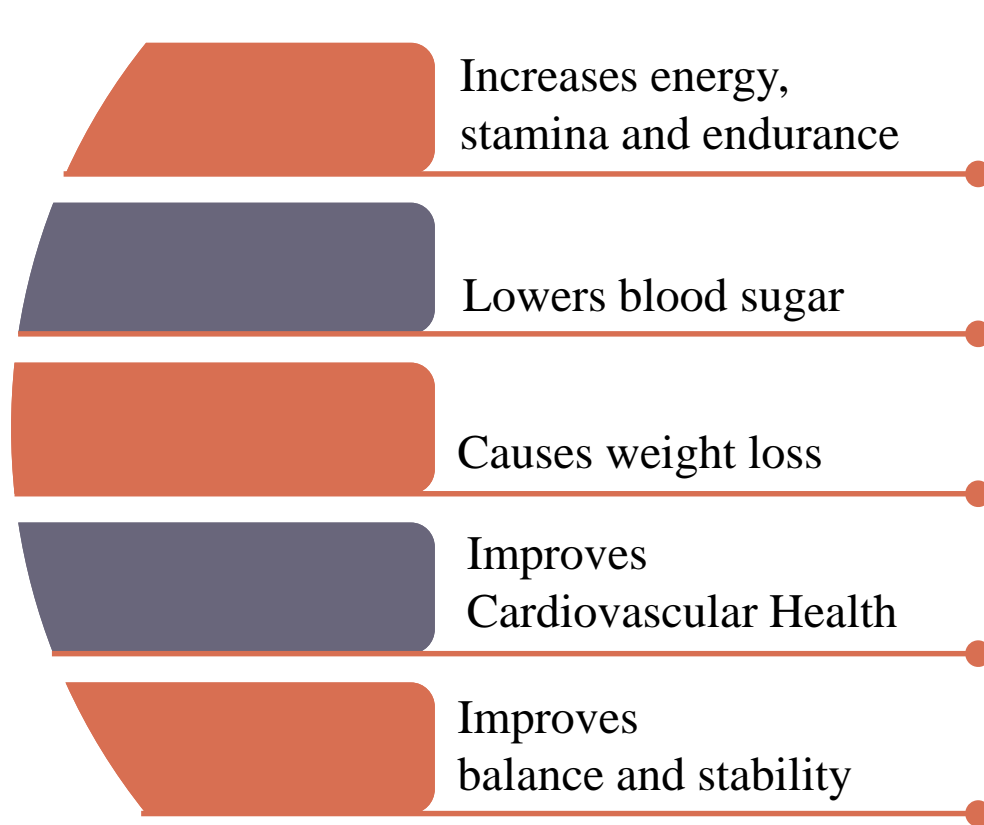
Introduction

- This lecture will cover the physical, emotional and mental health benefits of walking, along with guidelines on effectively prescribing walking as part of a patient's care plan.



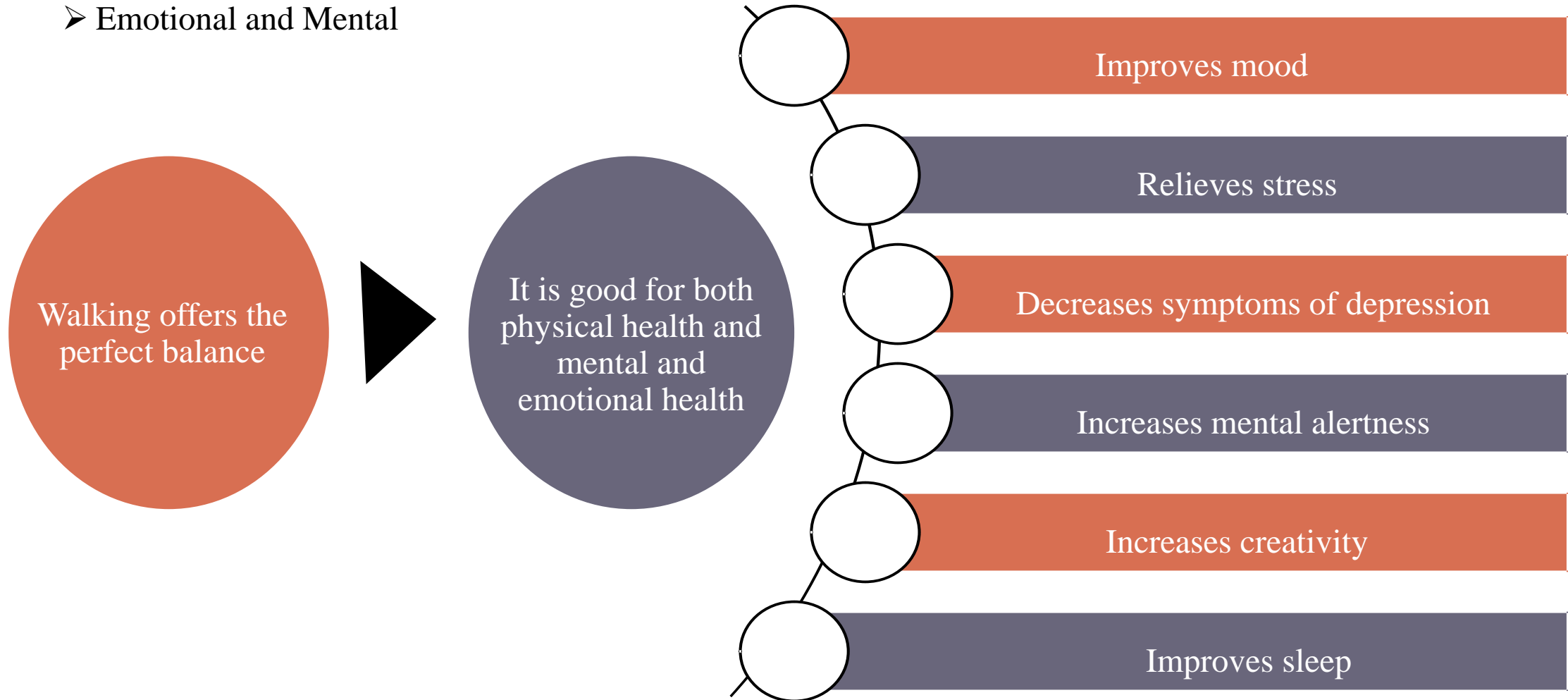
The Benefits of Walking

➤ Physical



The Benefits of Walking

➤ Emotional and Mental



Physical Benefits Of Walking

How Does Walking Increase Energy And Stamina?

- Releases endorphins, natural mood lifters, which energize the body
- Improves blood flow and oxygen circulation in the body
- Strengthens muscles in the legs, hips, core, and arms
- Burns calories and boosts metabolism

Why Does Walking Improve Endurance?

- Strengthens heart and lungs
- Increases heart rate, improving blood flow
- Lowers blood pressure
- Builds muscle
- Burns calories



How does walking lowers blood sugar?

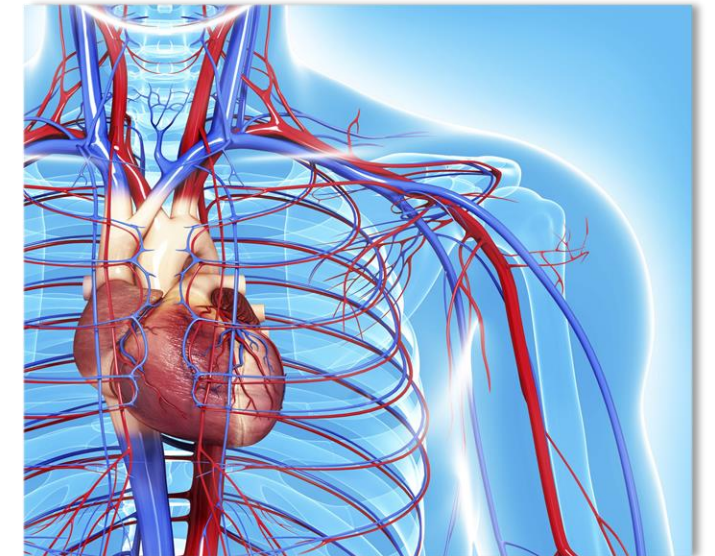
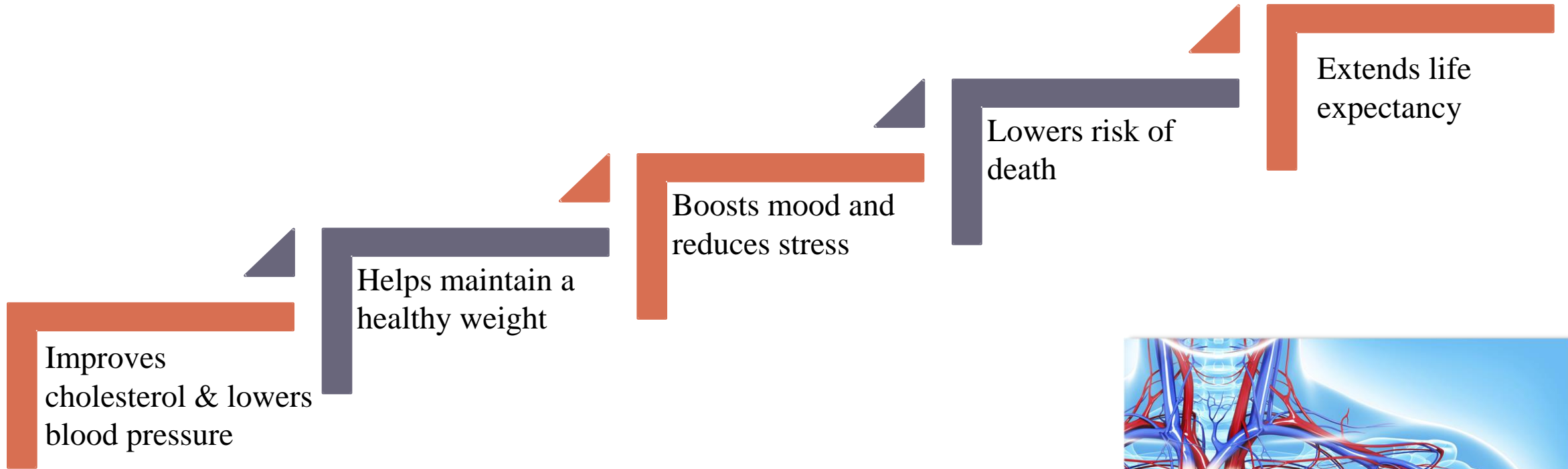
- Exercising after eating can help control blood sugar levels
- Brisk walking lowers blood sugar over time
- Improves insulin sensitivity
- Decreases the chance of developing type 2 Diabetes

How does walking cause weight loss?

- The faster and more frequent your walking, the more calories you burn.
- Weight loss occurs when fewer calories are consumed than burned.
- Walking for weight loss should be brisk, more than once a day, and involve moving arms across the body



Walking and Cardiovascular Health





Walking Reduces Joint Pain

- Strengthens bones and keeps joints flexible
- Improves blood flow and nourishes cartilage
- Reduces inflammation
- Produces endorphins which decrease pain
- Helps to maintain healthy weight



Walking Improves Balance & Stability

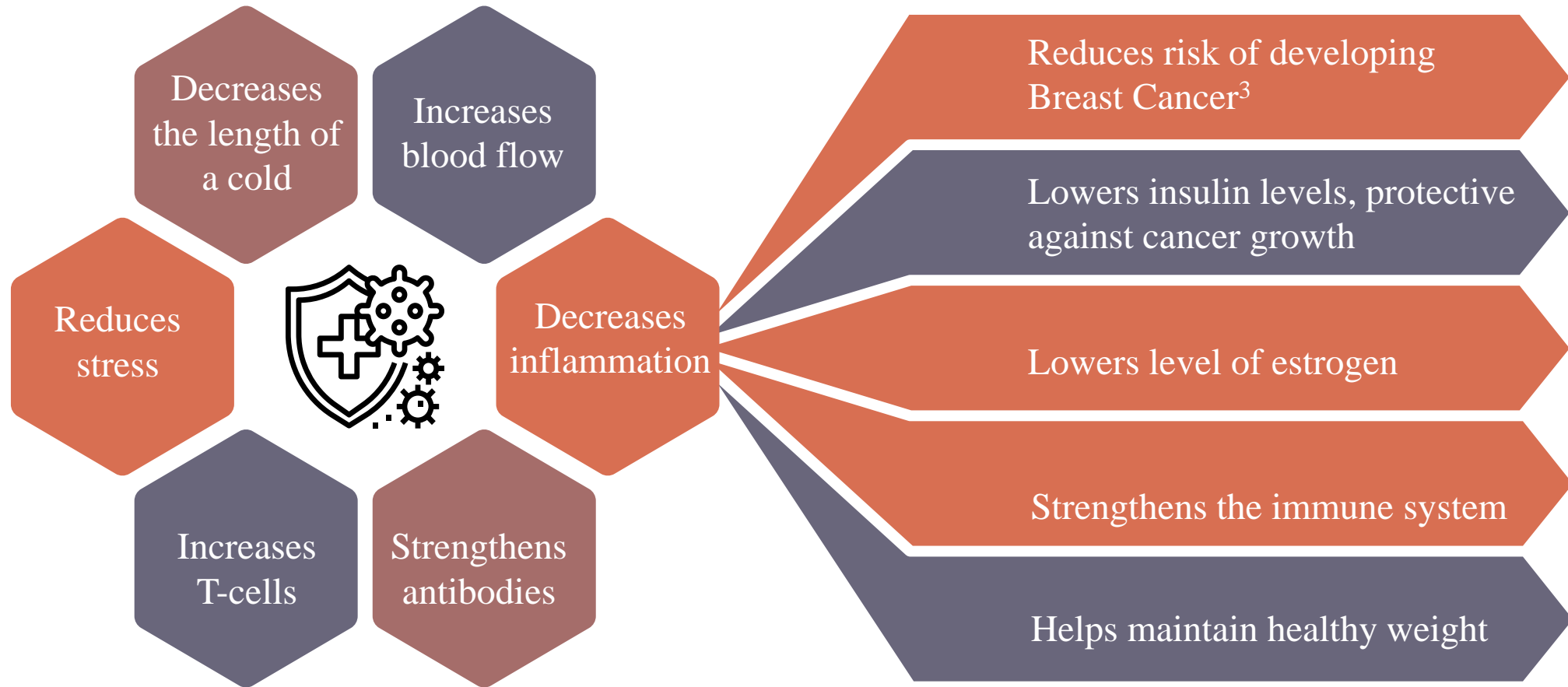
- Strengthens the muscles in the lower body, especially ankles, feet, hips, and core
- Sensory nerves relay messages to the brain
- Shifts center of mass



Walking And Toning Legs

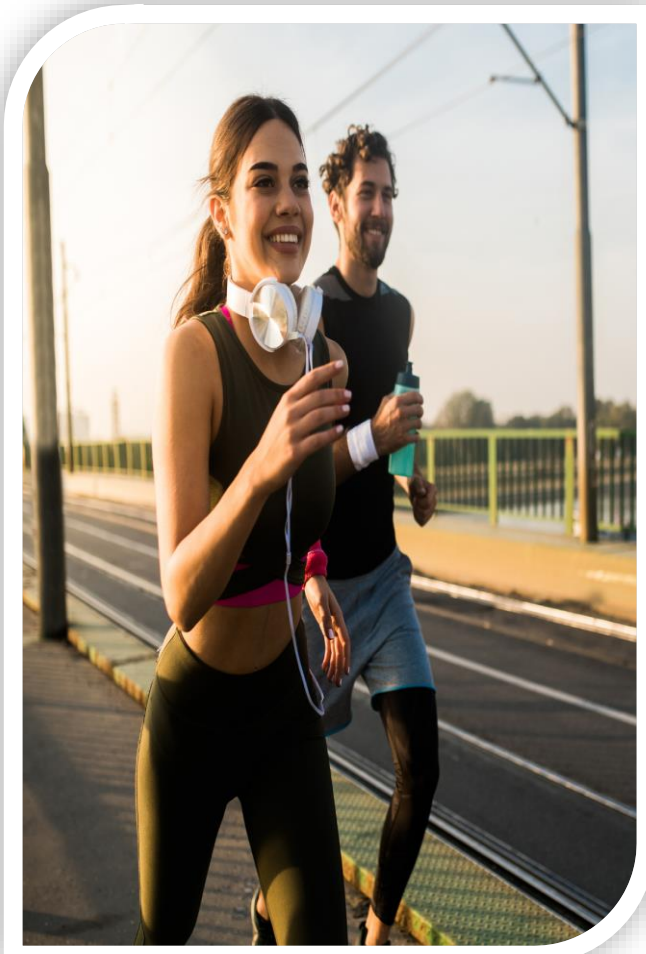
- Repetitive motion
- Low impact
- Increases range of motion
- Burns calories

Walking And Immune Function



Emotional and Mental Benefits of Walking

Walking Improve Mood And Stress



Decreases cortisol, the stress hormone in the blood

Boosts brain blood flow & oxygen, releasing “feel-good” hormones like endorphins & serotonin²

Improves sleep that is often disrupted by stress and affects mood

Disconnect from stressors and negative emotions

Spending time in nature increases positive emotions

A 10-minute walk improves overall mood

Decreases symptoms of depression¹

1. DeAngelis, T. “Want to boost your mental health? Take a walk.” American Psychological Association, Nov 1, 2022.

2. Nelson, C. “Why Walking is the Ultimate Exercise: 13 Benefits and Safety Tips.” verywellhealth. Oct 18, 2024.

Walking improves sleep which is both a physical and a mental benefit

- Increases melatonin
- Regulates body temperature
- Reduces Stress
- Improves Mood



Walking causes increased mental alertness and creativity

- Improves cognitive function including problem-solving, focus, learning, and memory
- A person's creative output increases by an average of 60% whether walking either inside or outside.⁴

4. Oprezzo, M., Schwartz, D. "Give Your Ideas Some Legs: The Positive Effect of Walking on Creative Thinking. Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning Memory, and Cognition. 2014; 40(4):1142-1152.

How To Prescribe Walking To Patients

How To Prescribe Walking^{1,2}

Start Slowly

Start at a comfortable pace and gradually increase to a moderate intensity.



Build Routine

Begin with three walks per week and increase to five or more over time.



Track Progress

Use a step counter to monitor and achieve your goals.



Extend Gradually:

Start with 5-minute walks and build up to 30 minutes, splitting them into smaller sessions if needed.



Make It Fun:

Listen to music, walk with a friend, or join a walking group to stay motivated.

The US Department of Health and Human Services recommends that people of all ages perform 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical exercise per week or 75 of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week

1. DeAngelis, T. "Want to boost your mental health? Take a walk." American Psychological Association, Nov 1, 2022.

2. Nelson, C. "Why Walking is the Ultimate Exercise: 13 Benefits and Safety Tips." very well health. Oct 18, 2024.

5. Percy, K et al. "The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans." JAMA. 2018.

Conclusion

- Walking is an important therapeutic intervention. It offers both the mind and body incredible benefits.
- Walking is a simple health behavior that can reduce rates of chronic disease, decrease health care costs, and has relatively few injuries.
- Walking increases life expectancy.²
- The results are maximized if walking is balanced with a healthy lifestyle including a supportive environment, a nutritious diet, and sufficient sleep.¹



1. DeAngelis, T. "Want to boost your mental health? Take a walk." American Psychological Association, Nov 1, 2022.

2. Nelson, C. "Why Walking is the Ultimate Exercise: 13 Benefits and Safety Tips." very well health. Oct 18, 2024.