

DON'T WALK for EXERCISE!

Do you know that walking may not be the best exercise for you?

It's almost unanimous in the health care profession that walking is good for the human body. There are countless articles and scientific research backing the effectiveness of adding walking to one's fitness routine.

But is walking good for every one?

No.

As a physician, I can tell you that walking is a low impact exercise. It's less stressful than other exercises on weight bearing joints. It's great for the heart and lungs and for mental well-being. And it's also an exercise that anyone, at any age, from the very young to the very old can do.

So I am writing this article not to bash the benefits of walking as exercise but to make you aware of circumstances when walking, as exercise, should not be YOUR first choice.

Many of my patients have heard me say that I am not opposed to ANY form of exercise or activity as long as the body has been prepared to do this activity. Prepare. This is paramount. People get injured when they don't prepare. An example: Skiing requires leg, hip, and lower back muscles to be strong and fatigue resistant so that a body is able to ride up and ski down a mountain all day or for an entire weekend. Preparing weeks to months with resistance training workouts for all leg muscles as well as hips /buttocks and lower body core muscles will allow an individual to enjoy the activity of skiing pain-free while at the same time will prevent injury from occurring. Skiing every weekend during the winter will be more fun when pain-free. You may even ski faster and better than your ski partner because your body has been conditioned for the activity.

A quick anatomy lesson. The nervous system is the electrical wiring system of the human body. It's just like the electrical wiring of a house or a car. There are many sensors and relays that tell the brain in humans (similar to the computer module in cars) what is happening at that moment. For example: When a person walks up a flight of stairs to go to the bedroom and back down again, a person may feel themselves breathing faster than usual and feel their heart beating faster, too.

This increased breathing sends an increased supply of oxygen to the muscles being used and the increased heart rate is to help move the oxygenated blood to the muscles faster for immediate use. Sensing this need is automatic in our nervous system. It prevents our muscles from cramping and maintains our oxygen level so that we don't faint.

When we feel a burning sensation on our muscles during exercise, this is often normal. Normal, specifically if we are lifting a heavy weight repeatedly. However, if the burning sensation continues for hours after exercise or we feel a burning sensation when we are NOT exercising, our nervous system is telling us something. Tingling, shooting, throbbing, cramping, or numbness are signals that *something is wrong*. If these symptoms continue for a period of time, it is wise to seek a *knowledgeable* professional for proper evaluation.

Which brings me back to walking. If you are having hip pain, groin pain, knee pain, ankle and/or foot pain, lower back pain, any or all of the above symptoms, walking may NOT be the best exercise to start at this time. Some people may feel better *while* walking but may feel worse several hours or days after walking. In this situation, walking may be causing more irritation and will eventually make any problem worse.

Arthritis is often blamed for many of our aches and pains. But arthritis does NOT cause pain. Arthritis is the outcome of irritation. Many patients have had full hip and/or knee replacements because of arthritis supposedly causing pain in a joint. But then, several months or a year later, the same pain returns in the same joint, *which is now an artificial joint*. What is the presumed reason for the symptoms now? (I will go back into this topic of arthritis at another time in a different article.)

Let me be clear: Pain, tingling, numbness, etc., (aka: symptoms) on the outside of the hip have a different root cause than pain, tingling, numbness in front of the hip. Symptoms in the buttock or groin area have different causes, too. Any symptom on the inside of the knee has a different causation from symptoms on the back of the knee, which have a completely different root cause than symptoms below the patella (knee cap). Symptoms on the inside of the big toe have a different causation from symptoms on the bottom of the big toe, which have a different causation from symptoms on the top of the big toe. Different ways of causing irritation will result from the different types of symptoms. If the clinician (doctor) does not understand this concept of irritation, then the problem will

continue to persist and linger for an extended period of time. Age is definitely NOT the reason for any symptoms at any, any, any age!

If you have any of these symptoms / problems mentioned, upright cycling should be your choice of exercise, not walking. Cycling is less irritating on the body whether exercising indoors or outdoors. Cycling is less likely to increase further irritation to any existing problem and is less likely to start a new one. Upright cycling will allow you to start your CARDIO exercise program safely. Do your stretching and rolling and hydrate! And please, Do NOT do planks for your core. Planks will eventually shut you down in misery! (Exception: unless you are joining the military)

That's all for now. Stretch, hydrate and stay well.

Dr. Hubert Welt
Chiropractic Orthopedist

Welt Chiropractic Center