

**State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**



**Department of Human Services  
Division of Elderly Affairs**

**RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT**

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**WALK YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH**

**CRANSTON ---** It's a fact that regular exercise is a key component in any well-designed plan to maintaining good health, managing chronic health conditions, and keeping a positive attitude. Exercise at any age has its benefits. You don't have to spend a lot of money to join a gym to exercise. You don't have to hire a personal trainer. And you certainly don't have to run the Boston marathon. All you need to do is get off the couch and start walking.

Walking is probably the most common form of exercise for seniors. A regular walking program can help you to control your weight, improve your balance, lower your risk of heart attack or a stroke, and just make you feel better. It might be a good idea to put together an informal walking club with your relatives, neighbors, and friends. That way, you can exercise and keep up on the latest news at the same time.

As with any physical fitness program, it's a good idea to check with your doctor or health care professional before you begin your walking regimen. That's the first of six steps offered by the AGS Foundation for Healthy Aging to developing a safe, effective walking program. Here are the other five steps:

Plan your program with your healthcare provider. If you have not walked or exercised for a long time, start slowly. You may want to walk just two or three blocks at a time at first, while building up slowly to 20 or 30 minutes daily. You don't have to walk several miles to get the benefits of the exercise. The most important thing is to get started and to exercise consistently. Make walking a part of your daily life. Steady progress will yield valuable health rewards.

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Wear the right shoes. Comfortable sneakers or walking shoes work for most people. See your health care professional if you have special needs.

As we've already discussed, get a walking buddy or buddies. It's more fun to exercise with friends and you are more likely to stick with the program if you have someone to walk with.

Don't let a cane or walker stop you. You may move more slowly and cautiously, but you can still realize the benefits of walking. A walking program can still improve your strength and balance, and moving around can also help to relieve stress on painful joints.

Establish the right pace for you. While you should try to walk as briskly as you can, it's also important to enjoy the time spent exercising. A pace that is too fast can be stressful and perhaps may be risky. Find a pace that's comfortable for you.

Even before you begin your walk, you should spend about five minutes warming up by walking slowly. After warming up, you should stretch your calf muscles, quadriceps, and hamstrings. Your health care professional can give you some suggestions on how to stretch properly. End each session by walking slowly again for about five minutes. This will reduce the stress on your heart and muscles.

Happy walking!

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The Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA) is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. Questions or requests for additional information on the issues of growing older, or for issues concerning adults with disabilities in Rhode Island should be directed to: Larry Grimaldi, Rhode Island Senior Beat, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs, 74 West Road, Cranston, RI 02920 or faxed to 462-0545. The e-mail address is [lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov](mailto:lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov).