

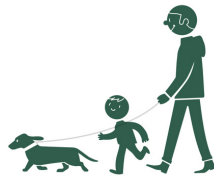
# Staying physically active is easy: Walking

## Every physical activity counts!

Incorporating physical activity into your daily life by walking, cycling, climbing stairs, or doing housework or gardening – is good for your physical and mental health. The rule of thumb is: any activity is better than none and increases health and well-being at every age.

## Walking...

- enhances well-being
- promotes good health
- protects the environment



Health-promoting exercise (Any type of exercise that promotes health and has a minimum of undesirable side effects is a health-enhancing physical activity) such as walking is the most natural and sustainable form of exercise and can be easily incorporated into everyday life at any age.

## Every step counts

Whether it's when going shopping, to work or to personal or professional appointments, make a conscious effort to cover your day-to-day journeys on foot and **make the most of walking opportunities such as lunch breaks, waiting times at bus stops and after work.** It's good for you, promotes well-being and concentration, boosts the circulation and helps combat fatigue and cold in winter. As an added bonus, walking a few stops instead of waiting for the bus or tram can even save you money.



Walking uses the body's large muscle groups, which increases energy expenditure. The speed and incline of the walk can influence the intensity and therefore how much energy is expended. **Brisk walking is a moderate intensity activity**, like regular cycling. Brisk walking makes you breathless, increases your heart rate and raises your body temperature. When walking briskly, you can still talk but not sing.

## Ideal for those with sedentary lifestyles

Do you spend the majority of your day sitting? Don't have the time or inclination to exercise? If that's the case, walking is just the thing, as it's an easy way to start getting more exercise. **Every step you take to reduce inactivity, such as prolonged sitting, is worthwhile and will have a positive effect on your health, well-being, quality of life and fitness, whatever your age.**

## It's never too late to take the first step and any form of exercise is better than none!

Why? Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer, diseases which cause almost three-quarters of all deaths in Switzerland. People who exercise a lot not only build muscle, but also strengthen their bones, joints, organs and immune systems. In addition, they see improvements in their memory, learning ability and quality of sleep. Exercise also has a positive effect on mental well-being, social contacts and independence in later life.



## Physical activity recommendations for adults (18-64)

Täglich empfohlene Bewegung für Erwachsene (18–64 Jahre)



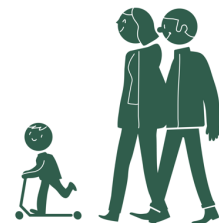
Quelle: hepa.ch, Magglingen 2023

The biggest health benefit comes from a minimum of 150 to 300 minutes of endurance-oriented, medium-intensity exercise (e.g. walking or cycling, gardening or housework) or a minimum of 75 to 150 minutes of high-intensity exercise (e.g. jogging, swimming, cross-country skiing, zumba) per week. Besides endurance, you should also do muscle-strengthening exercises of medium or high intensity at least twice per week.

Chart 1: Physical activity recommendations Switzerland (Source: hepa.ch 2023)

### Why we should walk more often and spend more time strolling in nature

**Did you know?** The English word 'stroll' derives from the German word strolchen/strolchen (to roam around). Strolling is a leisurely, unhurried form of walking that serves the purpose of recreation or physical exercise. The emergence of promenades and parks is connected to strolling, as in the past, leisurely walking served the purposes of socialising and conversing, or was engaged in simply to enjoy gardens and parks



### Walking is relaxing

We all know what it's like: rushing for the bus, hurriedly shopping by car, dashing into town by bike... If you want to slow the pace of your everyday life, walk. When we stroll, we actively relax, have time to think or switch off, perceive the natural and built environment with all our senses, pay more conscious attention to sounds and smells, meet other people, choose new paths and discover the unknown.

**Did you know?** In Switzerland, some 20% of car journeys and 40% of tram and bus journeys are less than two kilometers long and could easily be done on foot.

### A stroll in nature helps combat stress

Strolling in nature, e.g. in forests, has a positive impact on mental health and helps to reduce stress. This effect was observable after even only a half-hour walk.



### Visiting forests is good for your health

A survey conducted in 2022 showed that the Swiss people really appreciate forests. People enjoy relaxing in forests, they go for walks, engage in sports, have picnics, observe nature, listen to the birds or simply enjoy the peace and quiet. A report published by the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) shows how and why visits to forests have a positive effect on health.

[Further information \[in German, French and Italian\]](#)

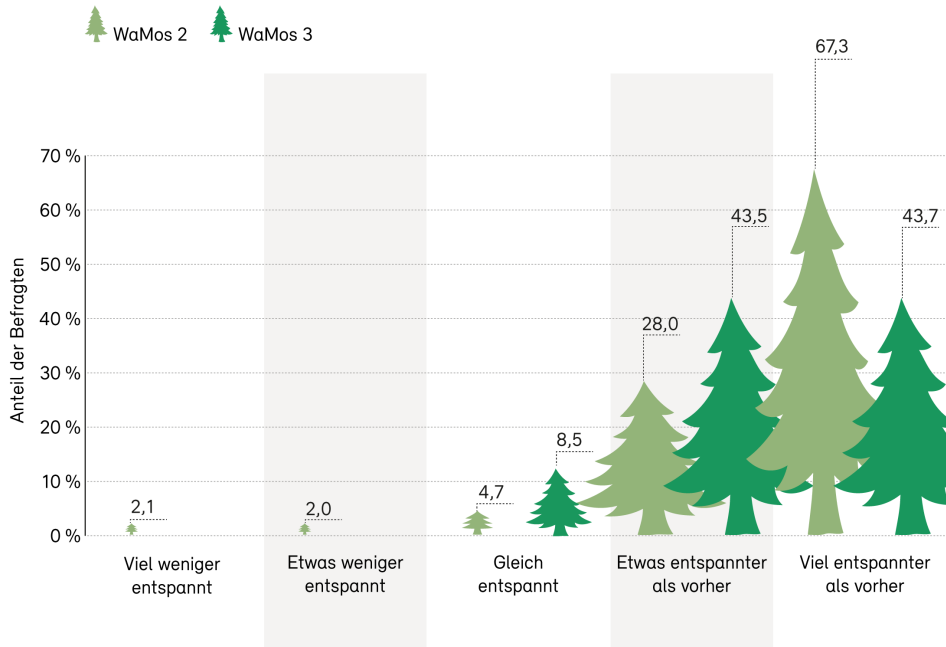


Chart 2: Forests make an important contribution to the well-being and health of the population.

The majority of respondents visit forests as a form of recreation and feel more relaxed after having visited forests.

(Source: [WaMos population survey](#) (in German, 2010, 2020))

#### Did you go for a walk today?

- I walked to work/to the shops/to an appointment today
- I made a conscious decision to walk rather than take the car/tram/bus today
- I arranged to go for a walk with someone today
- I went for a walk during my break/after eating/in my free time
- I went for a walk in a forest/park

## Sources

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**Federal Office of Public Health FOPH**  
Prevention of Non-communicable diseases Division

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