



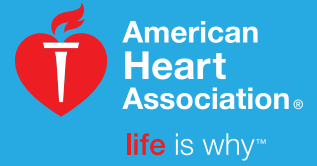
American
Heart
Association®

life is why™

NATIONAL WALKING DAY

RESOURCE GUIDE





Getting Started

National Walking Day 2016 is Wednesday, April 6. By committing to walk for at least 30 minutes, you can get healthier and raise awareness about the importance of being physically active. On this day, millions of people throughout the United States will come together to take steps toward a healthier life for themselves, their families and their communities.

You can celebrate in your workplace, school, faith-based organization, or family. This guide includes instructions, tips and resources to help you celebrate National Walking Day and plan a great event for your group or organization.

What You Will Find in this Guide:

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Your free online toolkit at Heart.org/NationalWalkingDay includes many more resources and materials:

- Four Weeks of Healthy Living Tips
- Four Weeks of Healthy Living Articles/Handouts
- Four-Week Activity Challenge Tracker
- Posters and Graphics
- Warm-Weather Fitness Guide
- Cold-Weather Fitness Guide
- PowerPoint Presentation





Action Plan

National Walking Day is a day to get active and kick off healthy habits in your organization, community or family. Start here with our step-by-step action plan, then follow the specific tips and ideas for your setting.

Step 1: Get leadership approval

If you need approval to celebrate National Walking Day, use the email template on page 6. It has great information you can share with your leadership about why this health-focused program is good for the organization and community.

Step 2: Choose your date

National Walking Day is April 6, but you can celebrate on a different date if it works better for you. The important thing is to kick off a month-long focus on being more physically active! Once you choose a day, get it on people's calendars right away, and use one of our communication templates to help build awareness.

Step 3: Plan your celebration

Get creative to come up with your own special touches that will make it meaningful for your organization or community. Basic event components may include:

- Rally or kick off
- 30-minute fun walk
- Healthy snacks
- Prizes or giveaways
- Educational opportunity (wellness fair, health assessment, presentation, etc.)

Be sure to schedule or reserve any needed facilities and logistical resources.

Step 4: Spread the word

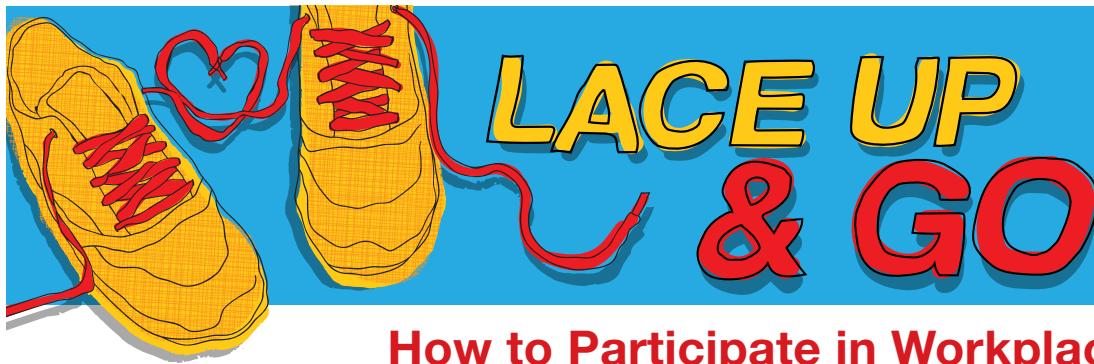
Start sending daily tips to get everyone moving. Promote your event and National Walking Day 2016. Use the emails, social media posts and articles/handouts we've provided. Invite others to get involved. Display posters in common areas to build awareness. Your toolkit includes free promotional materials.



Step 5: Celebrate!

Take a breath, and start walking. National Walking Day is an opportunity for millions of Americans to take steps toward a longer, stronger and healthier life, but it's also about having fun and creating community. Don't forget to enjoy the day!





How to Participate in Workplaces and Organizations

Before National Walking Day

Building excitement is important for a successful event. There are many ways to do this, including:

- Use social media to increase awareness and engagement.
- Have your CEO or senior leader send organization-wide voicemails and/or emails. Use our communication templates or create your own.
- Use giveaways and incentives. Visit shopheart.org for some options. Our red shoelaces are a great tie-in to this year's theme.
- A week before the event, kick off a walking competition among your senior leaders. Give them all pedometers and ask them to track their steps each day. The winner and their department could receive some sort of reward — jeans day, lunch or time off.
- Setting a goal or making a pledge are often great ways for people to kick off a healthy lifestyle. Ask each employee to write down one goal or pledge to start living healthy and to post it at their workspace. Incorporate it into the Four-Week Activity Challenge.

On National Walking Day

- Make it a “casual day.” Wearing sneakers or comfortable shoes will make it easier for everyone to participate. Encourage them to wear red shoelaces as a symbol of their support of the event.
- Host a walk. Set a time for your senior leaders to lead employees/members on a 30-minute walk. This could be indoors or outdoors. Map a route in advance to avoid surprises.
- Kick off the day with a rally. Ask your CEO or senior leader to address employees/members using the information in this guide or the provided presentation. Announce the start of the Four-Week Activity Challenge.
- Host a wellness fair. This could include:
 - An introduction to making healthy choices a personal priority through AHA's Life's Simple 7 and My Life Check assessment. Within a few minutes, participants will know how they're doing with each one of Life's Simple 7 measures. A personal heart score and report will help them create a personal action plan. Learn more at MyLifeCheck.Heart.org.
 - How-to activity workshop with a local fitness center or trainer to educate participants on physical activity topics like the proper way to stretch.
 - Presentation by a registered dietitian nutritionist about healthy eating.
 - Cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings from a local hospital or clinic.
 - Testimonial from a heart disease or stroke survivor.

Ways To Make It More Fun

- Make the Four-Week Activity Challenge a competition among departments or teams, and offer prizes.
- Hold another rally or a picnic to celebrate your success at the end of the four weeks.
- Keep the momentum going by participating in the Heart Walk. Have fun and raise funds to save lives from two of our leading killers — heart disease and stroke. Find details for your local event at HeartWalk.org.
- Encourage your employees/members to form ongoing walking clubs using our tips and resources at Heart.org/WalkingClubs.





How to Participate in Schools

Before National Walking Day

- Use social media to increase awareness and excitement.
- Send emails. Use one of our email templates or get creative and make your own.
- Setting a goal or making a pledge are often great ways for people to kick off their healthy lifestyle. Ask each student, teacher and staff member to write down one goal or pledge to start living healthy. Incorporate this pledge into the Four-Week Activity Challenge.
- Invite other community members to volunteer or participate. Use our email template to invite parents and guardians to join in on the day with their children.

On National Walking Day

- Wear sneakers. Comfortable shoes will make it easier for everyone to participate. Encourage them to wear red shoelaces as a symbol of their support of the event.
- Host a walk. Set a time to lead your students and teachers on a 30-minute walk. This could be indoors or outdoors. Map a route in advance to avoid surprises.
- Kick off the day with a rally or assembly. Invite a guest speaker to speak about healthy living and physical activity. Announce the start of the Four-Week Activity Challenge.
- Host a wellness fair or educational event for your school community, including:
 - An introduction to making healthy choices a personal priority through AHA's Life's Simple 7 and My Life Check assessment. Within a few minutes, participants will know how they're doing with each one of Life's Simple 7 measures. A personal heart score and report will help them create a personal action plan. Learn more at MyLifeCheck.Heart.org.
 - How-to activity workshop with a local fitness center or trainer to educate participants on physical activity topics like the proper way to stretch.
 - Presentation by a registered dietitian nutritionist about healthy eating.
 - Cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings from a local hospital or clinic.
 - Testimonial from a heart disease or stroke survivor.

Ways To Make It More Fun

- Make the Four-Week Activity Challenge a friendly competition among classes or grade levels and offer prizes.
- Encourage each classroom or grade level to come up with a team name and mascot.
- Hold another rally or a picnic to celebrate your success at the end of the four weeks.
- Continue the focus on healthy physical activity by getting your school to participate in Jump Rope For Heart or Hoops For Heart. Have fun and raise funds to save lives from two of our leading killers – heart disease and stroke. Find details at Heart.org/Jump.
- Start a school walking club using our tips and resources at Heart.org/WalkingClubs.





How to Participate as an Individual or Family

Before National Walking Day

- Use social media and email to increase awareness among your family and circle of friends. Use our templates or get creative and make your own.
- Set a goal or make a pledge to commit to a healthier lifestyle. Post or display your goal as a daily reminder of your commitment. Incorporate this pledge into the Four-Week Activity Challenge.
- Challenge your community, friends and family to join you and set their own goals.
- Take action to get better informed about your health. Learn how to make healthy choices a personal priority through AHA's Life's Simple 7 and My Life Check assessment. Within a few minutes, you'll get a personal heart score and action plan. Learn more at MyLifeCheck.Heart.org.

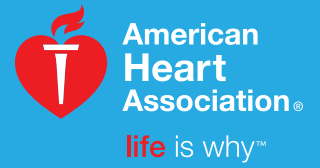
On National Walking Day

- Make it a "casual day." Wearing sneakers or comfortable shoes will encourage you to walk more. Wear red shoelaces as a symbol of your support and commitment.
- Take a walk, or set a time to lead your family or group on a 30-minute walk. This could be indoors or outdoors. Map a route in advance to avoid surprises.
- Kick off the Four-Week Activity Challenge.

Ways To Make It More Fun

- Make the Four-Week Activity Challenge a friendly family competition and offer prizes.
- Form a neighborhood walking club using our tips and resources at Heart.org/WalkingClubs.
- Have a party or picnic to celebrate your success at the end of the four weeks.
- Continue the walking focus by participating in the Heart Walk. Have fun and raise funds to save lives from two of our leading killers — heart disease and stroke. Find details for your local event at HeartWalk.org.





Communication Templates

Use these templates to communicate about and promote your participation in National Walking Day. Customize them to fit your needs. Add a personal touch when possible for greater appeal to your audience.

Talking Points/Email to Management for Approval

I would like your approval to kick off a healthier way of living for our employees by celebrating National Walking Day with the American Heart Association. The official day is Wednesday, April 6, but we can have our own celebration on another date if needed and continue the program throughout April. We'll get free resources to help our employees get on a healthier path.

Health care is one of the most significant cost pressures facing companies today. Consider these sobering facts:

- The costs of cardiovascular diseases and stroke, including health care expenditures and lost productivity, total more than \$316 billion.
- About 69 percent of American adults (more than 159 million) are overweight or obese — and this number continues to grow. At the same time, about 30 percent report participating in no leisure time physical activity.
- One in four American adults (about 85.6 million) are living with some form of cardiovascular disease or the after-effects of stroke. And for African-Americans, that number is nearly one in two.
- About 550,000 people in the U.S. have a first-time heart attack each year, and about 200,000 have recurrent heart attacks.
- Each year, about 795,000 people have a stroke, the number one preventable cause of disability.

Source: American Heart Association, 2016 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update.

The good news is that National Walking Day can play an important role in getting our employees and our nation healthier while:

- Offering practical health information, tips and resources to help people adopt a healthier lifestyle.
- Providing a fun activity that fosters morale, team-building and productivity.
- Letting our employees know we care about their health and support their efforts to improve it.

[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT YOUR PROPOSED EVENT]





Communication Templates, Continued

Brief Announcement

Step by step, day after day, you walk to make progress. Every day we take thousands of steps to get where we need to go. Now we can take steps toward a healthier lifestyle and support the American Heart Association.

On Wednesday, April 6, [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] will join the American Heart Association in celebrating National Walking Day. It's a day to challenge ourselves and our nation to get heart healthy and fit. We'll have some fun events on this day including:

[INSERT EVENTS – RALLY, KICK OFF, WALK, ETC.]

Please put it on your calendar now. More details will be coming soon!

Detailed Announcement

On Wednesday, April 6, we'll be celebrating National Walking Day with the American Heart Association. Physical inactivity is a huge national problem. About 70 percent of Americans struggle with maintaining a healthy weight and don't get enough physical activity.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week for adults and 60 minutes *per day* for children and adolescents. Most of us right here at [INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] don't meet that standard. And it means we're at greater risk for heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases. But we're not going to take it sitting down.

On April 6, we'll join millions of Americans as they pledge to live a healthier lifestyle and get physically active. Here's what you can do to join in the celebration:

- Show your support and wear your sneakers with red shoelaces on April 6.
- Join our rally and 30-minute fun walk at [INSERT TIME] at [INSERT LOCATION].
- Pledge to live a healthier lifestyle and start a habit of daily walking at [WORK, SCHOOL, HOME]. Follow our designated Walking Path or another route, and invite others to join you.
- Visit Heart.org/Walking and use the American Heart Association's free tips and tools to stay motivated on your walking program.
- Sign up to participate and raise funds for our community's [HEART WALK, JUMP ROPE FOR HEART, HOOPS FOR HEART] on [INSERT DATE].

Please join us for this fun group celebration that can help us all live longer, stronger, healthier lives.





Communication Templates, Continued

Personal Announcement

Every day we take thousands of steps to get where we need to go. Now we can take steps toward a healthier lifestyle and support the American Heart Association.

On Wednesday, April 6, I will join the American Heart Association in celebrating National Walking Day. It's a day to challenge ourselves and our nation to get heart healthy and fit. Will you join me?

Find out more at Heart.org/NationalWalkingDay.

Day Before Event Reminder

Don't forget: Tomorrow is our National Walking Day celebration. Be sure to join us for a fun rally and a short walk. Most of all, don't forget to wear your sneakers and red shoelaces if you have them! Meet us at **[INSERT LOCATION]** tomorrow at **[INSERT TIME]**.

See you there!

Post Event Activity Challenge Announcement

Thanks to everyone who joined us to celebrate National Walking Day. We had a great turnout and a lot of commitment to get healthy and get fit. **[ADD MORE HERE IF DESIRED, e.g., announcement of winners, pledges, etc.]**

But we can't get healthy in one day. So we're launching a Four-Week Activity Challenge, courtesy of the American Heart Association. Each week, we'll be sending you everything you need to complete the challenge, including:

- Daily tips
- Weekly articles/handouts about getting healthy
- An activity challenge tracking form

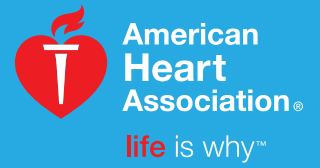
[INSERT DETAILS ABOUT CHALLENGE, PRIZES, ETC.]

[INSERT FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE PARTICIPATING IN HEART WALK] Don't forget that part of fighting heart disease, the nation's number one killer, is helping the American Heart Association fund lifesaving research. We can do that by spreading the word and raising funds for the **[INSERT CITY NAME]** Heart Walk on **[INSERT DATE]**. There's still time to join the team! **[INSERT DETAILS, SIGNUP INFO, ETC.]**

Thanks again, and keep walking!

[IF APPLICABLE, INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT RALLY OR EVENT AT THE END OF THE FOUR WEEKS]





Communication Templates, Continued

Personal Activity Challenge Announcement

Thanks to everyone who joined me to celebrate National Walking Day. We can't get healthy in one day. So I'm launching a Four-Week Activity Challenge, courtesy of the American Heart Association. Will you join me? I'll provide:

- Daily tips
- Weekly articles/handouts about getting healthy
- An activity challenge tracking form

Don't forget that part of fighting heart disease and stroke is helping the American Heart Association fund lifesaving research. We can do that by spreading the word and raising funds for the **[INSERT CITY NAME]** Heart Walk on **[INSERT DATE]**.

Thanks, and let's get walking!

Email and Social Media Tips

- Don't overwhelm people with too many messages. Think about your audience and how much information they'll want. If you don't want to send daily emails, use social media or send one email a week with a number of tips and the article/handout.
- Ask for feedback on the tips you're sending. For example, if you provide a tip on being active at work, ask readers to share photos or tips on how they do it.
- Encourage friendly competition and recognize activity challenge teams and leaders.
- Follow the general theme of each week (see articles/handouts) to provide a fresh focus for content.
- Use a countdown by stating how many days are left: "10 days to go!"
- Use the countdown in reverse by announcing which day of the challenge you're on: Day One, Day Two.
- Show off your red shoelaces and use the hashtag [#AHALaceUp](#) to join the national conversation!





Four Week Activity Challenge

We know it takes more than just one day to form lasting healthy habits. Use National Walking Day as a starting point and keep the momentum going by launching a four-week challenge focused on physical activity. This is a great way to extend the fun all month and can be customized to your workplace, community, school or family.

We've included everything you need to motivate your participants:

- Daily Tips — Email or share on social media and encourage participants to try them with their families.
- Articles/Handouts — Provide one each week of the challenge to kick off that week's theme.
- Activity Challenge Tracker — Provide at the beginning of the challenge so people can track their progress.

Participants can set their own individual goals or use this basic pledge:

"I pledge to walk or be physically active at least 150 minutes per week for four weeks to improve my health."

The Activity Challenge Tracker form provided in the online toolkit helps people track their total minutes per day and week. Any type of moderate to vigorous activity counts, such as walking, running, biking, dancing, playing sports, etc. You may want to post the trackers in a visible place and share weekly results/standings with all participants.

Consider offering prizes as an incentive. Here are a few suggestions of achievements to recognize:

- Everyone who completes the challenge by achieving a total of at least 150 minutes for each of the four weeks
- The most improved participant who increases their total minutes per week the most
- The person who achieves the most total minutes each week or for the overall four-week period

Give your challenge a creative theme or tagline such as "Spring into Action" or "4 Weeks 4 Health." As with your National Walking Day event, make the challenge your own by customizing it to your audience.





More Resources

The American Heart Association offers many free resources to help people be more active and live healthier.

- Visit Heart.org/HealthyLiving for the latest info on physical activity, healthy eating, kids' health, weight management and much more.
- Visit Heart.org/WorkplaceHealth for employer resources including our Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit.
- Get information on [CPR and emergency cardiovascular care training](#), including programs designed for schools and workplaces.
- Find information about your local Heart Walk event at HeartWalk.org.
- Find information about offering Jump Rope For Heart and Hoops For Heart in your school at Heart.org/Jump.
- Mark your calendar now to participate in [National Eating Healthy Day](#) on the first Wednesday in November.
- Connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
- Sign up for our [Healthy Living](#) or [Heart At Work](#) e-newsletters.

Thank you from the American Heart Association for participating in National Walking Day. If you need any assistance planning your event or you have any questions, please contact [your local American Heart Association office](#).

