

HARDER BETTER FASTER STRONGER



WALKING CAN BE A GREAT way to get fit and burn fat, but there's a catch. If you stick with one routine (same route, same pace, same playlist—sound familiar?), you never challenge your body to work harder. And that means that eventually your weight loss stalls, sending your motivation south. To get back on track, you've got to increase the intensity of your walks and switch up your routine throughout the week. Turn the page for six fun alternatives to your same old workout.

HAIR AND MAKEUP: JUANITA LYON FOR THE CELESTINE AGENCY

1

WALK WITH INTENSITY

It's no wonder interval training is hot right now. "Alternating short, intense bursts of speed with recovery periods burns significantly more calories than walking at a steady rate," says Lauren Fairbanks, a personal trainer at Equinox Fitness in San Francisco. This training technique can also firm and flatten your stomach. Researchers at the University of Virginia found that women who did three shorter, fast-paced interval walks a week (plus two longer, moderate-paced ones) lost five times more ab flab than those who walked at a moderate speed five days a week. As a bonus, you're not just melting fat during an

interval workout. The added challenge keeps your metabolism revved up for up to 24 hours, boosting overall calorie burn.

To get started, warm up at a comfortable pace for 3 minutes, then alternate 1 minute of speed walking with 1 minute of easy strolling. Do this for 20 minutes, then cool down for 2 minutes. "If you usually walk at a pace that makes it easy to carry on a conversation, push yourself to a point where it's pretty hard to talk," says Martin Gibala, Ph.D., a professor of kinesiology at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Gradually increase your speed and tweak the ratio between recovery and effort.

2

HEAD FOR HIGHER GROUND

Take your routine to the next level by adding a few hill- or stair-climbing intervals. "Your body has to work harder against gravity, which cranks up your calorie burn and builds strength and endurance," says trainer Ramona Braganza, whose clients include Jessica Alba and Anne Hathaway. And climbing is a super-effective way to tone legs and sculpt a firmer butt.

4

TRY A PAIR OF POLES

When you use Nordic walking poles (think cross-country ski poles for the road), you tone your arms, back, chest and shoulders—and you blast more flab. You'll burn up to 67 percent more calories than if you exercised without poles, according to a study published in the *Journal of Strength & Conditioning*.

3

ADD A FEW POUNDS

Amp up your calorie burn by wearing a weighted walking vest. It's safer than using hand and ankle weights, which can place too much stress on your joints. "Because the extra pounds are distributed evenly around your spine, a walking vest also helps build bone density and conditions your core," says Christa Bache, a personal trainer in New York City. She recommends buying a vest with removable weight packets and starting with the lightest load (usually about 4 pounds); increase the weight by no more than 10 percent a week.

5

IMPROVE YOUR POSTURE

Slouching while you walk throws off your body alignment, making you more prone to injury (and if you're laid up, you're not going to lose weight). It also zaps your energy. To maximize your workout, pull your abs in tight and draw your shoulder blades back. Keep your chin parallel to the ground and look straight ahead. Watch your arm pump, too: elbows bent at 90 degrees, arms close to sides, hands unclenched. "Swing your arms from front to back so that you're pumping your energy forward," says Fairbanks.

6

SNEAK IN STRENGTH MOVES

When you add brief strength-training intervals, you get that post-walk metabolism boost. Stash a lightweight resistance band in your pocket, says Bache, then stop for a few minutes several times and use the band to do moves like biceps curls, rows and triceps kickbacks. Or work with props along your route: benches and playground equipment for push-ups, triceps dips, lunges and squats.

THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF WALKING

You can see the results of all those workouts in your mirror: leaner legs, a flatter belly, a tighter butt. But walking also improves your health on the inside.

IT IMPROVES CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Brisk walking increases your level of good HDL cholesterol, which can lower your heart-disease risk.

IT PROTECTS YOUR BONES

A recent study found that women who walked regularly in middle age reduced their risk of hip fractures later in life.

IT CONTROLS BLOOD SUGAR

A 2011 British study shows that walking reduces insulin resistance (the condition that leads to type 2 diabetes), partly because it keeps weight in check.

IT'S GOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN

Brain mass naturally shrinks with age, but according to a recent study, walking just six miles a week can help maintain brain size and protect your memory.

IT EASES BACK PAIN

People on a regular walking program saw a 9 percent reduction in back pain, according to a review study in *The Spine Journal*.

BE A LOSER

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