Walk This Way

A strenuous gym workout isn't for everyone.

October 1, 2011 By Cristina Gonzalez

Did you know that a walking workout can still get your heart pumping and muscles working?

Walking workouts provide a ton of benefits. They improve overall fitness, decrease risk of cardiovascular disease and boost bone density and mental health, says Julie Bishop, MD, assistant professor of orthopedics surgery at Ohio State University in Columbus.

To cash in on all these benefits, you should walk 20 to 60 minutes, three to five days each week, Bishop says. It's easy to get started. Buy a pair of walking shoes (replace them every six months), choose a route, decide on distance and intensity and head outside.

Before you get to stepping, though, warm up with a three- to five-minute stretch. End your walk with another round of stretches. And follow the "rule of 10s," Bishop says. Pick one of three areas (distance, intensity and duration) and increase it by 10 percent each week.

If you don't have time to commit to a longer walk right now, increase your intensity to still get great benefits. When time permits, build up to longer walks.

But what's most important, Bishop says, is to have fun walking.

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