

## **Benefits of Walking as an Exercise**

Walking exercise before surgery and during your recovery after surgery can help you overcome the side effects of surgery such as:

- Post-operative complications like pneumonia or blood clots in the deep veins in your lower legs
- Skin breakdown and pressure ulcers that can be caused by prolonged bed rest
- Back pain and stiffness
- Difficulty passing gas
- Constipation
- Decreased fitness and de-conditioning from inactivity
- Feelings of sadness, stress and anxiety

### **Walking BEFORE your surgery**

Begin a walking program before surgery in preparation for your upcoming surgery.

- Ideally try to walk for 30 minutes a day/ 5 days a week. Keep a brisk pace but you should be able to talk in full sentences if needed. This is called the 'Talk Test' and is the recommended exercise intensity for conditioning.
- If unable to walk 30 mins at a time, small amounts of walking done throughout the day such as 10 mins of walking done 3 times a day is also beneficial.
- Choose a flat surface to start your walking and then gradually incorporate slopes or hills for further conditioning, only if you can safely do so.

### **Walking in the Hospital AFTER your surgery**

- While in bed, leg pumps will be applied to help promote blood flow in your legs. When it is time to get out of bed, your hospital staff (nurse or rehab) will help you:

Sit up at the bedside

Move from the bed to a chair

Walk in the hallways.

- You may feel dizzy or faint when first getting up, so you must move slowly at first. This means sitting up slowly and sitting at the side of the bed for a few minutes before standing.

Please let the staff know if you feel faint, dizzy, nauseated, or are short of breath while walking.

- You should try to walk 3 times a day while in the hospital with help from your nurse or rehab therapist.

### **First 6 weeks after Discharge**

- Most individuals are able to comfortably continue their in-hospital walking routine when discharged from hospital. This usually involves short walks of approximately 5-10 minutes about 3-5 times a day.
- Listen to your body and gradually increase the time you spend walking every day.
- Eventually most people can walk continuously for up to 30 minutes. Remember that everyone progresses at different rates so take things at your own pace.
- Discomfort during or after walking can be an indication that you have overdone things a little and that you need to ease off on your speed and time spent walking.

### **Week 7 onwards**

By this time you have usually had your check up with your surgeon. When you have the all clear to exercise, you may wish to start gradually increasing the speed of your walking and the distance you walk. Remember that for most patients, full healing requires three months so you need to continue to progress your walking program gradually.

### **Tips for Safe Walking**

These tips will help you ensure safe walking during your recovery:

1. Walk on flat smooth surfaces. Try challenging surfaces such as grass, gravel, inclines and hills only if you can safely do so.
2. Wear supportive and cushioned footwear.
3. Wear quality support briefs and clothing for comfort and support when walking
4. Don't walk too far- remember that you have to walk back home
5. Short regular walks are preferable to long walks especially within the first 6 weeks after surgery.
6. Do not begin jogging or running unless you have talked to your physician.