

How many steps each day are enough?

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nking2@tulane.edu



It's heart health month — a good time to re-evaluate health and fitness goals. One study recommends that adults walk a minimum of 3,000 steps in 30 minutes on five days each week or three bouts of 1,000 steps in 10 minutes each day. (Photo from Thinkstock)

February is heart health month — a good time to get back to health and fitness goals, and many people are using wearable technology to help.

One function of these devices — such as Fitbit or Garmin — is to track steps per day, and oftentimes the default goal is 10,000 steps. Most devices allow you to adjust that goal. So how many steps are enough?

The main point is that people should walk, and walk more than they have previously, says [Jeanette Gustat](#), clinical associate professor of epidemiology at the Tulane University [School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) and investigator at the Tulane [Prevention Research Center](#).

"Time and intensity factor in as well," Gustat says. "But really with walking, and all activity, it is about doing more. And with walking it's easy because it takes little equipment and nearly everyone can do it."

Although many fitness trackers — and groups such as the American Heart Association — cite 10,000 steps as a goal, official national fitness guidelines don't actually promote a specific number of steps, Gustat says.

To obtain substantial health benefits, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 2008 [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends adults get at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or 75 minutes (1.25 hours) of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination, each week.

The U.S. Surgeon General recently launched a [Step It Up campaign](#) to promote walking and walkable communities, which uses these physical activity guidelines.

According to some reports, steps recommendations originated around the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and a Japanese marketing campaign to promote pedometers. With the rise of pedometer use in the U.S. as well, researchers have found them to be useful and began translating physical activity recommendations into steps. A 2011 study from the Louisiana State University's Pennington Biomedical Center recommended that adults walk a minimum of 3,000 steps in 30 minutes on five days each week or three bouts of 1,000 steps in 10 minutes each day.

Naomi King Englar is the communications coordinator for the Tulane Prevention Research Center and the Tulane Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health.

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