

# How to Warm Up for a Walk

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The perfect walking workout is like an upside-down letter "U." You start slowly, rise up, then drop down to finish. That assures a built-in warm-up and cool-down in every walk.

Why warm up? An easy start allows your body temperature and heart rate to rise, preparing you for an elevated level of activity. As the temperature of your muscles and joints increases, they become more compliant and less prone to injury. Moreover, capillaries in your muscles dilate which increases blood flow and delivers extra oxygen to your working muscles.

A gradual warm-up can increase your comfort and performance at any speed. I recommend these five simple moves before any brisk walk, as they target specific muscles and movements central to walking. All are done standing up; when needed, rest one hand on something for balance. If you spend 30 seconds on each move, the whole routine takes under three minutes.

## 3-minute Warm-up

**Ankle circles:** Stand on one foot and lift the other off the ground. Slowly flex that ankle through its full range of motion, making circles with the toes. Do six to eight in each direction, then switch feet and repeat.

**Leg swings:** Stand on one leg. Swing the other loosely from the hip, front to back. Use a relaxed motion like the swinging of a pendulum. Your foot should swing no higher than a foot off the ground. Do 15 to 20 swings with each leg.

**Pelvic loops:** Put your hands on your hips with your knees gently bent and feet shoulder-width apart. Keep your body upright and make 10 slow, continuous circles with your hips, pushing them gently forward, to the left, back, and to the right. Then reverse directions and repeat.

**Arm circles:** Hold both arms straight out to your sides. Make 10 to 12 slow backward circles with your hands, starting small and finishing with large circles, using your entire arm. Shake your arms out, then repeat with 10 to 12 forward circles.

**Hula hoop jumps:** Begin jumping lightly in place on both feet. Then, with your head and shoulders facing forward, twist your feet and lower body left then right, back and forth as you jump, 20 times.