



Basic 1 – 10, 000 Steps Per Day

Do you really need to walk 10,000 steps per day? How much does intensity account for getting fitter, leaner, lighter? Is investing time and energy into getting your steps in everyday a wise investment?

In the lead up to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, athletic fever hit Japan. Its people were encouraged to move in solidarity with the athletes and a pedometer was first introduced. It was marketed under the name “*manpo-kei*” which translates to “10,000 step meter”. The challenge resonated with the people of Japan and gained popularity with Japanese walking groups.

Studies conducted since then, using the 10,000 step model have concluded that people who increased their steps to 10,000 experienced health benefits.....well I say DUH!

Of course moving more increased health benefits, but where did the participants start on the health spectrum? And we all know moving more is better right?

The real question is not whether 10,000 steps is good for us as humans in general, but is that the right prescription for us as an individual. And to know what dose and at what intensity is enough for each of us, we first need to know where do you fit on the spectrum of health?

Take an office worker that walks 50 steps to the car 100 steps into the office, 50 steps to the lunch room and reverse that to get back home, they then sit at their home computer or on the couch watching TV and you are looking at a worse case scenario of sedentary behavior with only 500 steps per day.

Or on the other end of the spectrum, a Postal worker putting in 20,000- 30,000 steps per day, some even more than that.

We need to gather some personal data to see if 10,000 steps are enough for you, you need to see how many you are actually taking and how active you really are? Our Non-Exercise Movement Patterns (NEMPs) are vital to our general health and well being. These are the foundations that we can build higher level training from.

So step 1, is not with your feet but with technology to track your activity. Fitness trackers of all shapes and sizes, including price tags are readily available. Get your trackers out and start gathering data everyday.

Step 2—Do you walk right? Even if you are the Sedentary Office worker, how many other things do you do repetitively everyday 500 times? 5 days a week, 40 work weeks per year that’s 100,000 opportunities to either help or hinder your hips, knees, ankle, back, neck and head. Poor walking mechanics will lead to compensatory patterns, and neuromuscular feedback to turn off some muscles while turning on others, and not in a good way!



These compensation patterns, matched with adaptive shortening from sitting, will inevitably cause low back pain, knee pain, ankle immobility, head and neck pain. So if you have ever experienced any of these symptoms you need to learn how to walk properly and actively engage those muscles that are turned off, and lengthen those that have shortened.

Ask your self these 5 simple questions about your walking.

- 1) Are you pushing off your toes?
- 2) Are you taking a long enough stride that your glutes are active on every step?
- 3) Are your feet, ankles and knees traveling directly in front of your hips or are you too wide or too narrow?
- 4) Is there motion from your shoulders or are you stiff?
- 5) Are you looking at the horizon or at the ground?

In order for your body to activate the muscles that support the kinetic chain, to ensure healthy posture and alignment we need stability in some joints and high mobility in others. If something as basic as your gait is out of alignment, imagine the wear and tear created in the joints when loaded in high intensity exercises.

So 10,000 steps are 10,000 opportunities to build a strong foundation, without intensity to better protect the body when under high loads!

Do you have a great gait? If you can say a resounding YES, then you can move onto higher level training, at high intensities and high loads. However, in my professional opinion, I believe we all need more practice.

Part 3, of this challenge is to take your assessments, from Step 1- are you getting enough daily physical activity and NEMPs in? Step 2- is your gait encouraging proper postural alignment? Shift the focus to these two points for this week and support your walking with exercises to increase mobility in the ankle, pelvis and upper back/ shoulders. And stability in the knee, glutes and abdominals.

Mobility - hold 1 & 2 for 30-90sec

- 1) Yoga squat – (heels have the weight, so if you cannot get on the ground roll up mat or towel to bring the ground up.

If you have knee or back pain do a modified version on the wall



- 2) Hip flexor stretch (squeeze those

glutes and tighten your core!)



- 3) Shoulders / upper back. If you do not have a foam roller, use a rolled up towel or mat, again Glutes and Core active. Large breaths in and out, do 5 X. move up and down the spine, but do not go lower than the bottom rib. ***keep core tight to protect low back***



Stability



- 1) Glute bridges – Core fully engaged, squeeze your glutes as tight as you can, front of the hips are open fully to the ceiling. A) If you can hold a strong bridge, try to walk your legs do not let your hips drop, keep them high throughout. Maintain alignment of ankles and knees with hips and heels directly under knees

- 2) Seated posture corrections – Sit tall in a chair with core engaged and place hands on back of head. Retract head back into hands and squeeze shoulder blades together, then open elbows as far back as possible, to stretch the chest while contracting the back.

