



THE WILDCAT WAY TO WELLNESS

Walk Across Kentucky



Walking is one of the most popular ways to become more active. You can walk with a friend or spend time alone. You can walk with your children, grandchildren, or pet. Walking can be done while you talk, listen to music, or enjoy the silence. This publication will help you learn more about the benefits of walking, how to walk safely and effectively, and what it takes to “walk across Kentucky.”

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Lack of physical activity is taking a toll on the health of Kentucky adults and children. Forty-five percent of Kentucky’s adults reported in a recent survey that they take part in no physical activity in their leisure time. Lack of time and energy are two of the reasons. We live in a world in which our time is spent in front of computers, televisions, or in cars running errands or eating fast food. The stress of our over-scheduled lives takes a toll, too.

Walking Your Way to Wellness

Walking may offer a way for you to enjoy better health. Regular walking can decrease your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and perhaps some forms of cancer. People who walk tend to have lower blood pressure and decreased risk of stroke. Walking also strengthens bones and muscles and can help control weight.

Walking can also help reduce stress. It seems to promote “brain fitness,” leading to a more positive outlook and greater mental

agility. Walking increases energy and may even help you sleep better at night. It can also be a way to spend more time with others or by yourself. People of all ages can benefit from regular walking.

Walking Well

Warming up before starting your walk will help prevent injuries. Ease into your exercise by walking slowly for five minutes and then stretching for a few minutes. Head and arm circles and hip and leg stretches are helpful in preparing you for your walk.

Proper form will make your walk easier and more comfortable, helping you get the most from your exercise routine. Here are some suggestions for walking correctly:

- Stand up straight and keep your eyes forward and your chin parallel to the ground.
- Keep your arms close to your body.
- Step onto the ground with your heel first, then roll through the step and push off with your toe.

Tips for Safe Walking

- Walk in the daytime or in well-lit areas at night.
 - Walk with a friend or in a group.
 - Do not wear headphones that prevent you from hearing potential dangers.
 - Pay attention to your surroundings and be cautious.
 - Walk on sidewalks and stay away from high traffic areas.
 - Wear bright, reflective clothing and shoes.
 - Carry water, especially on hot days, and identification.
 - Do not assume that drivers can see or have seen you.
 - Consider carrying a cell phone or carrying change for a public phone for emergencies.
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- Walk at a comfortable pace for you.
- Try to take a step that is a comfortable length for you, not too short or too long.
- Walk at an easy pace during the last five to 10 minutes of your routine to let your body cool down.

Try to walk at least three times a week. During the first week you may want to warm up by walking slowly for five minutes, stretching, walking briskly for five minutes, then cooling down for five minutes by walking slowly again. In the weeks that follow, increase your brisk walking two to three minutes a week until you can walk at a fast pace for 30 minutes to an hour. You should be moderately active for a total of 30 minutes at least five days a week to be healthy. If walking is going to be your main form of exercise, try to walk three to five days every week for 30 minutes each time.

Walking, Your Way

Finding ways to make walking work for you will help you stay committed to being more active. Before you begin a walking routine, take some time to think about why you want to walk. You probably want to be more active in order to feel better and become healthier. Consider what other goals you might be able to accomplish while walking. Maybe you would relish some time alone to think, listen to music, or let your mind wander. Perhaps you would like to visit the library more often. You may want to walk alone sometimes and with company at other times. Try to establish regular times for walking to keep yourself committed and make it easier to schedule walking with others.

If you like your walking time to be social time, you can encourage walking through gifts of walking shoes and other equipment for family members and friends you would like to walk with you.

Take these steps to make walking a part of your regular routine:

- Since television can compete with the time you set aside for walking, don't automatically turn it on any time you are at home.
- After work, establish regular, limited hours for using the computer and helping with homework. Get into the habit of changing out of your work clothes and into your walking shoes. Or, try walking in the morning before you dive into your daily routine.
- If you need to prepare dinner before you walk, put on your walking shoes before you cook so you are ready to go after dinner.
- Try walking instead of driving if your errands are nearby, especially if you are going to the mailbox.
- If you are waiting to pick up a child, having your car repaired, or doing something else that requires waiting, try walking while you wait.
- Park your car at the farthest point in the parking lot from the grocery or discount store.
- Walk at work while you talk with a co-worker, run an errand, or go to lunch.
- Check with your local Extension office to see if your county or community has a mall or track open to the public for walking during certain hours.

Try to make walking a part of your vacations, too.

Walk Across Kentucky

How many miles would you need to walk in order to walk across Kentucky? The Commonwealth of Kentucky is approximately 420 miles wide from its most western point to its most eastern point.

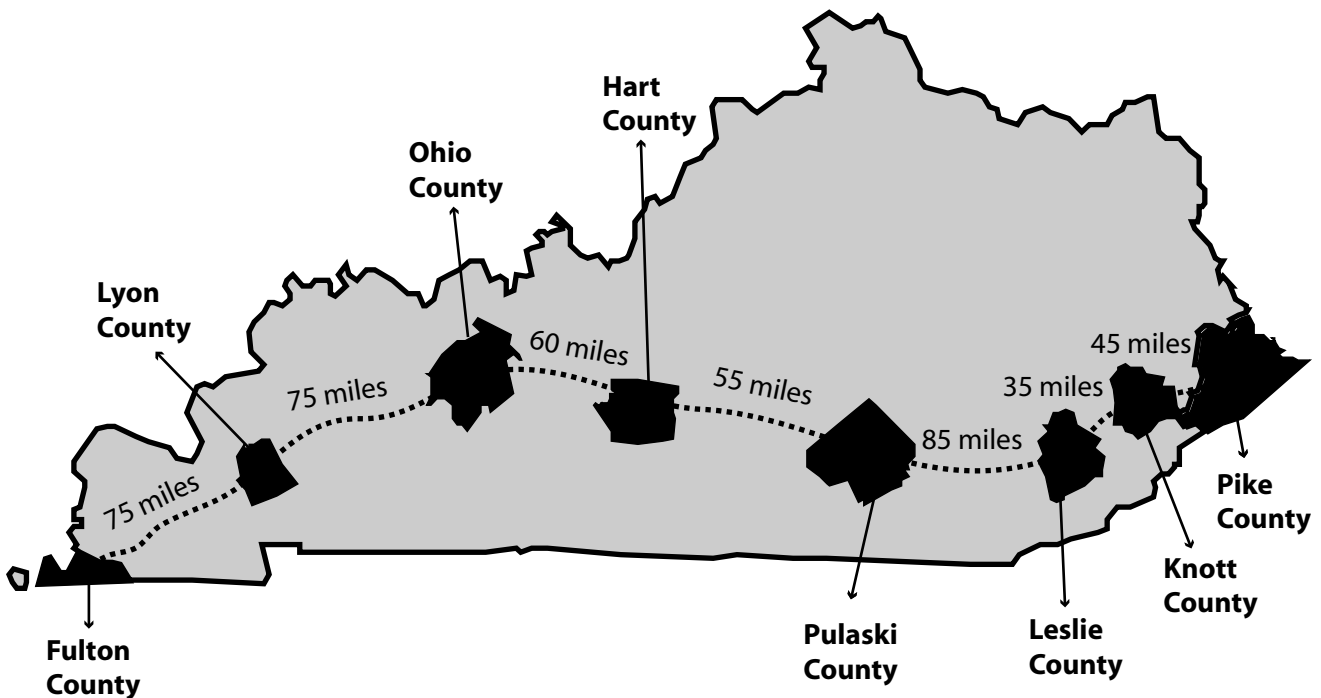
If you can walk a mile in about 15 minutes, you are covering about 4 miles an hour. If you walk for one hour five days a week, you will log 20 miles a week. At this rate, it will take you 21 weeks to walk 420 miles, the equivalent of walking across Kentucky.

Here are some interesting mile markers with approximate distances to help you track your progress, also shown on the map below. If you have the time, you may decide to take this route to walk across the state (for a total of 430 miles):

- Sassafras Ridge, Fulton County, to Kuttawa, Lyon County: 75 miles.

- Kuttawa, Lyon County, to Beaver Dam, Ohio County: 75 miles.
- Beaver Dam, Ohio County, to Horse Cave, Hart County: 60 miles.
- Horse Cave, Hart County, to Indian Hills, Pulaski County: 55 miles.
- Indian Hills, Pulaski County, to Thousandsticks, Leslie County: 85 miles.
- Thousandsticks, Leslie County, to Pippa Passes, Knott County: 35 miles.
- Pippa Passes, Knott County, to Stopover, Pike County: 45 miles.

Wherever you walk, from Pike County in the east to Fulton County in the west, Kentucky has a beautiful variety of scenery with mountains, rivers, and lakes. The state has an abundance of forests, wildflowers, and birds to watch while you walk, and state parks and other recreational areas have hiking and walking trails.



Walk Across Kentucky—The Commonwealth is 420 miles wide. You could walk the route shown on this map to walk across the state (for a total of 430 miles).

Walking as a Way of Life

Becoming a walker can open your eyes to a new way of seeing the world around you. You may meet new neighbors, watch new buildings take shape, and witness nature's ever-changing seasons.

You may also find that walking helps you to better see inside yourself. Many people find they have creative ideas or suddenly see a solution to a long-standing problem when they walk alone and have time to relax. An active body and an active mind can take you wherever you need to be.

This program was adapted from Walk Across Texas, a fun and fitness program developed in 1998 by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and Texas A & M School of Rural Public Health.

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