It All Counts

Walking Activity

Objectives:
1. Explore walking as a great physical activity.
2. Learn basics for using a step counter.
3. Become aware of ways to increase steps every day.

Age:
8 years and older.

Length:
Approximately 20 to 25 minutes.

Supplies and Materials:
1. Step counters – one per person. (There are many varieties and prices vary. Suggest searching online with key words such as step counters or pedometers. Also check with a local store that sells sporting goods.)
2. Safety pins.
3. Copy one All Steps Count handout for each participant’s take-home bag.

Special Considerations:
Wheelchair-Bound Participants: Participants who are in wheelchairs will not be able to use a step counter. Ask these participants to count the number of arm pushes they complete during the activities.

Activity Directions:
1. Conduct a brief discussion asking participants why they think walking is a good physical activity. Some responses to highlight include the following:
   * walking is easy
   * walking is inexpensive
   * nearly anyone can walk
   * walking can be done anywhere
   * as with any physical activity, walking energizes you and your mind
2. Distribute one step counter per person. Provide the following instructions (note these are for digital step counters with a lid):

* Open step counter and press the reset button so the digital display reads zero.

* Close the lid so it snaps shut, place clip on pants waistband directly over the knee, for extra security attach the alligator clip to waistband. For participants who do not have a waistband, use a safety pin to attach the step counter to their clothing at the waistline.

* Have everyone walk and count 25 steps. Open the lid and see if the step counter registered close to 25. If not, provide trouble-shooting assistance. Some things to check are: be sure the lid is closed, adjust the placement of the pedometer (at the waistline above the knee works for most but not all people: you may need to move it to the left or right), hit the reset button, change battery.

3. Once everyone has a working step counter, teach the Three Gears of Walking. A suggested script follows.

There are three gears of walking. Let’s try each of these.

**First gear:** easy strolling, light exertion, burns about 3 calories per minute. Similar to walking while you are shopping. Calories are units of energy we get from food and this energy fuels the body.

**Second gear:** normal walking, comfortable breathing and talking, moderate exertion; burns about 5 calories per minute and covers a mile in about 17 minutes. This is the pace you may use while walking to school.

**Third gear:** fast walking, heavy breathing, muscles working intensely, burns about 7 to 10 calories per minute. This is the pace you would walk if you were excited to get to the park to meet your friends.

4. Emphasize that all of these steps count. Have them look at the steps on their counters.

5. Ask participants to share some examples of when they walk and have the group pretend to walk at that pace. For example, being late for school or walking the dog. Again, look at the steps on their counters.

6. Next ask participants to share examples of activities they do that would not count steps but are still types of physical activity. Have the group act these out. For example: swimming or riding a bike. This time when they look at the steps on their counters, they may have added some just by moving around even though they were not actually walking.
Take Home Tidbit

*All Steps Count* handout.

**Sources:**
