



# WALK KANSAS

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

[www.WalkKansas.org](http://www.WalkKansas.org)

**2023 WEEK ONE**



## Finding YOUR Why

Exercise is often referred to as a “miracle drug,” and some physicians have been known to write “exercise prescriptions” for their patients. The physical and mental health benefits of moving more are astounding. These range from having more energy, a better outlook on life, and getting better sleep to preventing and managing many types of chronic disease, like diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, stroke, osteoporosis, and up to eight types of cancer.

Often, inactivity is more to blame than age when older people lose the ability to do things on their own. Lack of physical activity also can lead to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations, more uses of medicines for a variety of illnesses, and more of your hard-earned dollars spent on health care.

You are probably aware of these benefits, and the consequences for not being active, and yet this knowledge alone may not be enough to get you moving. Why is that?

If you approach physical activity only as a tool for improving health and losing weight, as we are socialized to do, it feels like another chore to add to your already overloaded to-do list. If you are relatively young and healthy, the threat of developing a chronic illness may be too far off to be relevant right now.

So, what is relevant at this moment? What benefits can you enjoy immediately? Are you feeling stressed and need a better way to manage? Could you benefit from time to think and clear your head? Do you feel sluggish and want more energy? Could you benefit from better sleep? How about your mood – would you like to be more positive around your family, friends and co-workers?

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When you view physical activity as a means of enhancing your daily well-being, it becomes part of your life that has purpose and meaning. It becomes something you want to do, rather than a chore. It becomes a gift.

Self-care is never selfish. You will be able to give more to others after you have taken some time for yourself, and this is a benefit that you can start embracing today!

Welcome to Walk Kansas 2023! The goal of this K-State Research and Extension health initiative is to help you develop healthy lifestyle habits that allow you to be the best you can be today, so you can enjoy better health for as long as possible. Each week, this newsletter will help you realize your “why” for being more active; offer tips to incorporate stretching, strengthening, cardio and balance exercises; explore healthy eating patterns/styles and provide a new recipe to try. Check out newsletters from previous Walk Kansas programs for even more information ([www.walkkansas.org/newsletter/index.html](http://www.walkkansas.org/newsletter/index.html))!

Enjoy the immediate benefits of physical activity this week and have a great Walk Kansas!

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## Get Off to a Good Start

Getting your body ready for exercise, and cooling down with stretches afterward, are crucial for keeping your body injury free and to improve flexibility. When pressed for time, however, many people skip this part of a walking or exercise routine.

A 5- to 10-minute warm-up should include light activity, such as leisurely walking, to help prepare your body and mind for more vigorous activity. This warm-up increases your body’s core and muscle temperature, and gradually increases blood flow, heart rate, and respiratory rate. You can also include some stretching such as arm circles, shoulder rolls, and knee lifts.

Just as important as the warm-up is a cool down after exercise. Take 5 to 10 minutes to slow your walking pace and allow your breathing to return to normal. After the cool-down, your warm muscles are ready for stretching. This is the best time to do static stretching, where you hold a stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Do upper and lower body stretches. Never stretch to the point of pain – just slight discomfort. Stay relaxed as you stretch, breathe in and out slowly, and don’t hold your breath.

Make sure to stretch both sides of your body equally, and don’t bounce or jerk when stretching. Stretch every day, if possible, or at least three times per week and always after walking or exercise.

Set yourself up for even more success by focusing on good posture while walking and performing daily activities. You may have heard “stand up straight” as you were growing up. This is good advice! Tighten your core (keep your stomach pulled in slightly) and don’t slouch or arch your back. Keep your eyes forward and avoid looking down. You should focus about 20 feet ahead of you, making sure to see your path and any obstacles. Keep your chin up, parallel to the ground, to reduce strain on your neck and back. Now, shrug your shoulders once, then allow them to fall and relax, slightly rolled back. Loosening up your shoulders will help relieve tension and put them in good position to use arm motion while walking.

Good posture helps you look and feel taller and more confident, helps improve walking speed, and prevents back and hip pain. It makes breathing easier and reduces risk of injury and falling.

## Med Instead of Meds

This 6-week webinar series is offered on Wednesdays at noon, from April 5 – May 10, at no charge for Walk Kansas participants. Sessions will be recorded. The webinar link is provided after you register. Learn basics to eat the Med (Mediterranean) Way, to improve your health with pans instead of pills.

**Register Today!**

[https://ksu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_cNlvJGNQsfeVAnoYM1-j9g](https://ksu.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cNlvJGNQsfeVAnoYM1-j9g)



## What is your eating style?

Your eating pattern represents your food preferences, culture, traditions, and budget. It is not a specific diet, rather a style. There is more than one way to eat healthfully and there are some components that healthy eating styles have in common:

- » Variety – of vegetables, fruits, and protein foods
- » Grains – half of which are whole
- » Fat-free or low-fat – dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese) and fortified soy beverages
- » Appropriate calorie levels and portion sizes
- » Limit – saturated fats and trans fats, added sugars, sodium, and highly processed foods

Eating healthy doesn't have to be hard or complicated, yet many people feel stuck when it comes to healthful eating. Maybe you feel confused about how to eat healthy, think it is too expensive, fear healthful foods won't taste good, you don't have enough time, or have limited cooking skills. Hopefully, over the next eight weeks you will find a couple of ideas and tips here that make healthy eating easier for you.

Grain bowls are a great way to transform odds and ends ingredients into a complete meal that is delicious and nutritious. You really don't need a recipe, just start with a grain base and pile on toppings! This recipe starts with quinoa, also known as the "mother grain" because of its nutrient profile. Learn more about quinoa ([www.walkkansas.org/doc/newsletter/2014/issue3.pdf](http://www.walkkansas.org/doc/newsletter/2014/issue3.pdf)).



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## Flavorful Grain Bowl

*Makes 4 Servings*

### Dressing/marinade ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- Salt and pepper to taste

### Grain Bowl ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups quinoa uncooked
- 12 oz. chicken breast, skinless
- 1 cucumber, diced
- 2 cups chopped grape tomatoes
- ½ cup red onion, diced
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- ¼ cup Kalamata olives, chopped

### Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Prepare Quinoa according to package directions.
3. Prepare produce and rinse under cold running water.
4. To a small jar, add all dressing/marinade ingredients and shake or stir vigorously to emulsify.
5. Slice chicken breast to ½ inch thickness. Place in glass container and pour about 1/3 of marinade over the chicken and toss to completely coat. Wash hands with soap and water. Reserve the remaining marinade to use as dressing, making sure it doesn't touch the raw meat.
6. Heat a grill pan over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and cook for 6-8 minutes per side, until cooked through and internal temperature reads 165°F. Remove chicken to cutting board and slice for serving.
7. Divide the quinoa among 4 serving bowls. Top with the chicken and prepared vegetables.
8. Crumble feta cheese over and drizzle with the remaining untouched dressing.

### Nutrition Information per 1 cup serving:

Calories - 580; Total Fat – 25g (6g saturated fat, 0g trans fat); Carbohydrates - 57g; Protein - 33g; Fiber – 3g; Sodium – 440mg; Sugar – 12g.