



Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.
Governor

Judith A. Monroe, M.D.
State Health Commissioner

Indiana State Department of Health

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Bill Frost likes to walk. In fact, to help show his fellow Hoosiers that walking can be a fun and healthy activity, Bill is participating in INShape Indiana - Walk Across Indiana. The purpose of the event is to promote the health benefits of walking, and includes locally organized walks in 26 counties during the week of October 22 – 28. Bill will be walking from Terre Haute to Indianapolis on October 27-28. Bill says that he wants to inspire people to get off of their couches and out being active.

What Bill knows, is that lack of physical activity is plaguing the health of Hoosiers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ranks Indiana 10th for the percentage of the population that is considered obese (BMI >30). For years, experts have recommended regular physical activity as the antidote for bulging waistlines. It is widely accepted that adults should aim for 30 minutes per day at least five days per week.

For some, this recommendation does not present a challenge. Being active comes easy. The reality for most, however, is that setting aside 30 minutes each day for some kind of physical activity is low on the list of priorities. It is easily set aside for more sedentary recreational activities like television watching and Internet surfing. Often overlooked are simple activities that can assist in reaching the recommended physical activity level over the course of a day with hardly a second thought.

Physical activity like walking can be performed in short bouts lasting as little as 10 minutes. If a person parks a vehicle 10 minutes a way from the office, he or she will get a total of 20 minutes of round trip walking daily. Another approach is to take a 10 minute walk around the block after lunch. Some office workers walk to a co-workers desk to discuss business versus sending e-mails to get in those extra steps. Much like planning a project or performing daily jobs, breaking tasks down into smaller parts allows the task to become much more manageable.

Walking can be the answer for many. Walking burns calories. Most Americans consume more calories than are burned through exercise, leading to slow and steady weight gain over time. Increasing the calories burned by walking will slow, stop, or reverse weight gain. Walking 10,000 steps each day is recommended, and using a pedometer is a good way to monitor the number of steps.

Brisk walking (that which raises the heart rate) can be the key to an active lifestyle. Parents would do well to take their children for a 30 minute walk every Saturday and Sunday as their family time together. They could also challenge their children with a reward of money for every mile they walk per week or offer to provide another healthy treat of their choice. The walking habit parents help start now could save future health problems for children in later years.

Epidemiology Resource Center Annex
2525 N. Shadeland Ave. Suite E3, Indianapolis, IN 46219
317.351.7190 ext. 253

Laboratories
635 North Barnhill Dr. Room 2031, Indianapolis, IN 46202
317.233.8000

Weights & Measures
2525 N. Shadeland Ave. Suite D3, Indianapolis, IN 46219
317.356.7078 ext. 221


Governor Mitchell Daniels'
INSHAPE INDIANA
WWW.INSHAPE.IN.GOV 800.433.0746

2 North Meridian Street • Indianapolis, IN 46204 • 317.233.1325 • TDD 317.233.5577 www.statehealth.in.gov

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