



A guide for staff participating in the **Steps to Health** Challenge 2021



What is the *Steps to Health* challenge?

The *Steps to Health* challenge encourages you to walk and count your steps during a five-week period. Form a team of between two and 10 people. Nominate a team co-ordinator to link in with our national *Steps to Health* challenge project team.

Research tells us that we are more motivated and likely to take part in physical activity like the *Steps to Health* challenge when we do it with friends and colleagues.

You can accumulate your steps during the day by:

- taking the stairs instead of the lift, if it is possible while following COVID-19 guidelines
- walking up and down the stairs a few times at home
- walking during your breaks
- walking near your home with your family

Aim to walk 10,000 steps daily, which is equal to eight kilometres or five miles. If you are new

to walking, start off with 10 minutes at a time. Build it up every day at your own pace to reach as many steps as you can.

How do I reach 10,000 steps daily?

Before you start the *Steps to Health* challenge, measure your daily steps using your:

- step counter
- smart watch – for example a Fitbit
- a free app you can download to your phone

You will find out how many steps you do daily without trying to be more active. This is your starting point for the number of steps to build on during the challenge.

Start from your comfortable number of daily steps and build up gradually to 10,000 by adding on 300 to 500 each day. If you are not active at present (3,000 steps or less), it could take you at least three weeks to reach 10,000 steps daily.

If you are already fairly active (7,000 steps per day or more), it should take you about a week to reach 10,000 steps daily.

New to walking? Start off small and build up your steps over time.

Can I improve my health by doing 10,000 steps daily?

Experts from across the world agree that by doing 10,000 steps daily you will improve your health and wellbeing. Research studies have found that by stepping out you can:

- have a stronger heart – decreasing your risk of heart disease like heart attacks and strokes by 50%
- have more stable blood sugar levels – reducing your risk of type 2 diabetes
- protect against some cancers, particularly colon and breast cancer
- have a healthier brain – increase your ability to do new tasks and protect your memory
- be happier, more energetic and sleep better

How do I use the step counter?

The step counter has a built-in pendulum which counts your steps as you walk.

Put the step counter on your waistband between your navel and your hip. It should be parallel to the ground and not tilted to the side. Make sure it is set at 0 each day. Your co-ordinator can help you if you have any questions about using or wearing it.

Tips to help you reach the 10,000 steps



Live near the beach?

If you are lucky enough to live close to the sea, try a walk collecting some nice pebbles or perhaps collect 3 pieces of plastic from the shore and bin them.

Guided walking tours

Perhaps you live in a big town or city, which has a guided walk you could take? Increase your steps while spotting some nice buildings or routes that are new to you.

Working from home

If you are currently working from home, try and get out for a walk either before or after work or a fast, short walk during your breaks.

Be prepared for a stroll

Keep a pair of runners in your car and you will have them handy whenever you have time spare, even if it's a five-minute stroll while waiting to pick someone up.

Guidelines for the annual Steps to Health challenge

Five-week challenge

The Steps to Health challenge runs for five consecutive weeks.

Set up a team

Set up a team with your work colleagues of between two and 10.

Work with your team co-ordinator

Your team co-ordinator will register your team with our national project team. We will ask your co-ordinator to collect your teams steps below and send us the totals for week 1 and week 5. This will be done anonymously. This will enable us to view the improvements at national level.

Please use your own step counter

If possible use your own step counter from last year's challenge. You can also use a smart watch for example a Fitbit or a free app you can download to your phone.

Wear your step counter all the time

Wear your step counter throughout the day – before, during and after work. If you change your clothes during the day, don't forget to transfer your step counter!

Complete the physical activity questionnaire before starting

If you are new to walking or returning after illness or injury fill in the physical activity questionnaire, known as PAR-Q. This is on our website www.hse.ie/stepschallenge

You don't need to share this with anyone.

It will allow you to assess if you need to see your GP or work Occupational Health staff first.



Spread the word – tell colleagues how good walking makes you feel.

Keep track of your steps

Record your daily step count on the “Daily Tracker” chart (available to print or download on www.hse.ie/stepschallenge) at the end of each day.

Keep your “Daily Tracker” chart for the five-week challenge and return it to your team co-ordinator at the end.

Your team co-ordinator will record the total number of steps for the team (not yourself!) at the beginning and end of the *Steps to Health* challenge. This will let us see how much progress has been made nationally.

You can use this guide for other challenges

This guide is written for staff taking part in our annual *Steps to Health* challenge. But you can also use it to do an individual steps challenge or to run a work team steps challenge at other times during the year.

Steps to Health Challenge 2021

More information is available on our website: www.hse.ie/stepschallenge

or email: stepstohealth@hse.ie

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Any extra steps you take every day will be good for your health.