

The Correct Way to Walk

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Introduction

It is a well-recognized fact that in order to achieve a general good health a person has to follow three important steps: Healthy standard of living, Healthy diet and Daily exercise, and here is where the walking exercise really assumes a special importance.

Walking is regarded as one of the best, healthiest, cheapest and most accessible form of physical activities, does not require attending a gymnasium, the purchase of complicated apparatuses and can be done at any convenient time because is sufficient to step out of the door and take advantage of the many roads, foot paths and parks available to anyone willing to use them. Floor exercise programmes should be regarded as complementing the daily walking programmes because walking is beneficial to the vascular, respiratory, muscular systems, strengthen the bone structure, just to name the major ones because the collateral benefits, known and unknown could be enormous such as immune system (the most effective vaccine), mental, etc. etc.

Therefore the best advice is: Walk, Walk, and Walk some more.

But to achieve the desired wellbeing and to receive the greatest advantages, walking must be correctly executed by following and using properly the various muscles and joints as supplied and made available within the body and do it in accordance with the rules of nature.

We have in fact, a substantial amount of muscles surrounding the hips followed by a reduced amount for the thighs and followed then by a further reduced amount for the calves. The gradual reduction of muscular volume indicates their exact proportional ability to carry us during the normal forward motion. Every component, according to nature, is expected to serve a specific purpose and if the intended purpose and order is not followed, problems become inevitable, problems which sometimes, could extend to the required replacement of the different portions involved.

Therefore it is logical to start examining, from the ground up, all the components involved in the operation.

The feet

First of all we have the feet; the feet are very often the most neglected part of the human body and yet they are the first to come in contact with the ground and offer support to it whole. We stand on them when getting down from bed, we use them for walking, running, dancing, balancing, jumping, playing football, etc. just to name few activities. They are, many times, completely disregarded, in fact they are frequently used totally unprotected by shoes or other covers yet they carry, uncompromisingly, all the body's weight starting from the heels right through their formation and up to the very tip of the big toes.

When you get up in the morning, stop for a minute, and take a close look at your feet before moving around and consciously consider what you are examining and how you are going to use what you see and what you are going to receive from them. The exercise of walking involves much more than just putting one foot in front of the other. Nature has provided us with a series of joints and tendons assisted by the appropriate volume of muscles, supported by bones, to guarantee

a smooth and orderly forward motion. Their arrangement, during the hundreds of years of evolution, has endured the testing of time and that is why, if those rules of nature are not followed, one will develop what is commonly referred to as "ache". Which becomes relevant to distinguish the difference between "ache" and "pain". Pain is generally caused by a deterioration or malfunction of an organ within the body while on the other hand ache is often a warning call from the brain that a part is not appropriately used or even not used at all.

The distinction becomes interesting since the first one requires medical assistance while the second one, generally, can be remedied by listening to what the brain communicates and a change of action or attitude becomes limited to the will of the individual unless there is an external reason or some genetic problem. Obviously the definition could be subject to individual interpretation depending on the severity and degree of tolerance but ultimately the most significant aspect is its origin.

Is important to recognise the reference of the "will of the individual" because, sometimes, is more convenient to say "but my case is different and there is nothing they can do" (making reference to professionals or medications). In that case the battle is lost even before it starts since the obligation of doing something is deflected on someone or something else rather than harnessing the positive power of the mind instead of capitulating on the negative one. It is useful to remember that massage, ointments and pain killers often, will not mend an aching joint but an appropriate and regular movement will.

Following these considerations it appears that a great number of people have forgotten or do not consider how to walk properly in other words walk without using the muscles, joints and tendons the way nature intended us to use them, consequently a substantial number of hip, knee, back and foot related problems develop.

Following on we come to the calves.

The calves

The calf's muscles, together with the tendons, are to operate and assist the functioning of the feet ready to take the propulsion force which must start from the heel and end with the big toe. (This last observation is not only important but essential) and the benefits are clearly noticed and felt when walking up hill and it will at the same time promote the blood circulation within the feet with all the related advantages.

The comments explains why the calf's muscles are at the back of the leg and the tendons (if we pay attention) are bundled at the back of

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the knee in order to pull up the heels while the muscles take the weight and the impact on the ground before it reaches the knee. Here is where lays the origin of so many knee's aches and replacements. During the forward movement, when the heels are pulled up by the muscles and tendons, (as mentioned), the feet must be maintained flexible and rotate on the ground with the propulsion ending with the big toe pushing the body ahead with the assistance of the calves.

Knee problems are sometimes wrongly attributed to the malfunction of the tendons which, as we can see, being located at the back of the knee, serve the purpose of lifting the heels and not operating the knees. While stepping forward, the foot not carrying the weight, is kept clear of the ground avoiding scraping it.

Thigh muscles

Moving up, we come to the thigh muscles which, considering their size, are, together with the tendons, assigned by nature for operating the knees.

Hip and buttock muscles

Finally we reach the hips and buttock muscles that, given their greater mass, are serving the whole leg. They are more than just a pretty sight but must be called into action during the whole process of walking and their importance becomes more evident in case of a hip replacement.

In fact, if used properly, it is interesting to notice that the recovery, after hip replacement, is faster and less painful than, for example, in the case of knee or shoulder replacement simply because the hips are assisted by a greater volume of muscles.

Other considerations

During the walking, the abdominal muscles must exercise an upward push of the upper part of the body and spread its weight right across distributing the task of carrying it. The spinal cord has to be maintained flexible by pivoting it at the belt line and moving it in unison with the hips and legs on a synchronize way, in other words as the right leg moves forward the right hip swings forward with it, followed then by a similar action of the left side. The upper part of the torso and the shoulder's line are maintained 90 degrees in respect of the direction of walking.

After several years of adopting this practice the process has proven very beneficial during the recovery following the hip replacement as well as by eliminating the occasional knee and feet aches.

The above course of actions are intended to assist in making the most of the mysterious mosaic of bones, blood vessels, muscles and articulated tendons which are the real workforce allowing the body to walk as "homo erectus" controlling how we stood and moved through thousands of years of evolution.