



# WALK KANSAS

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension

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

## 2024 WEEK ONE



## Habit Shift to Better Health

We are delighted that you have joined us for Walk Kansas 2024! This year, we will focus on ways to help you shift habits to eat better, move more, and sleep well. Each newsletter will explore a simple habit that can boost your overall health, offer tips to be more physically active, discuss nutrition topics, provide a tasty and healthful recipe, and more.

During this first week of Walk Kansas, make sure you read through the Activity Guide ([ksre-learn.com/wkactivityguide](http://ksre-learn.com/wkactivityguide)) and complete the Rockport Fitness Walking Test and the Flexibility Test. You will be asked to complete these again at the end of Walk Kansas and compare results. Also, check the Walk Kansas Participant Guide ([ksre-learn.com/wkparticipantguide24](http://ksre-learn.com/wkparticipantguide24)) for information on logging minutes/steps, fruits/veggies, chatting with team mates, and more. Newsletters ([walkkansas.org/newsletter/](http://walkkansas.org/newsletter/)) from previous Walk Kansas programs can provide you with even more information!

There are SO many physical and mental health benefits from moving every day, and the great thing is, many of these benefits are immediate. Physical activity can help you manage stress, reduce anxiety and blood pressure, and improve insulin sensitivity. Feeling tired or sluggish? A walk, doing some gardening, or playing a game of pickleball can boost your energy and help you sleep better at night. Are you feeling a little down? Physical activity can lift your mood and help you look at life through a more positive lens.

Now, it is time to get moving! Physical activity is often referred to as a “miracle drug” by health care professionals. I hope that Walk Kansas can give you a spark and inspiration to realize and enjoy the many benefits an active lifestyle can provide. Enjoy Walk Kansas 2024!

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## Getting Started

Every activity session should include a warm-up, a conditioning phase, and a cool-down. When pressed for time, many often skip the warm-up and cool-down phases, but these are crucial for keeping your body injury free, and they help improve flexibility.

The warm-up helps your body adjust from rest to exercise. Take 5 to 10 minutes for light activity, like leisurely walking, to increase your body temperature, and gradually increase blood flow, heart rate, and breathing. You can include some stretching like arm circles, shoulder rolls, and knee lifts.

The conditioning phase follows the warm-up, and this is where you monitor the intensity, or how hard you are exercising. Strive for moderate intensity, working hard enough so you can just barely carry on a conversation. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans ([health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines](https://www.health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity-physical-activity-guidelines)) recommend a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate activity per week. If you exercise at vigorous intensity (where you can only say a few words while you exercise), you can get similar benefits with 75 minutes of activity per week.

Just as important as the warm-up is a cool down after exercise. Take a few minutes to slow your walking or activity 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 and breathe in and out slowly, 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.



## Habit Shift Challenge

In this “habit shift challenge” we’ll explore a simple habit for you to consider adding to your routine. This week, keep a water bottle on your nightstand and sip water first thing in the morning. If you sip water early and often, throughout the day, it can help prevent dehydration and help you feel more awake. While there is no magic amount you need before starting your day, sipping water first thing can give you a nudge to approach the day with a wellness-boosting mindset and it allows you to space out your ounces from morning to night.

## Walk Kansas Webinars

**April 10: The Science of Happiness**

**April 17: Foot Care and Shoe Selection**

**April 24: Habit Shift to Better Health**

**Time: 12:10 p.m.**

**Link to join or scan the QR code below:**



<https://ksu.zoom.us/j/94021770836>

## Put More Plants on Your Plate

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds add a host of vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and fiber to your diet. Most of us don't get enough fiber and it has many health perks — it's good for your heart, your gut, and your blood sugar.

How can you put more plants on your plate? Start first thing in the morning by adding veggies and fruit to your breakfast. Add spinach or cauliflower to a fruit smoothie; have a breakfast salad; add veggies to your eggs, potatoes, and breakfast burritos; add berries and chopped fruit into batter for pancakes, waffles, and muffins; top oatmeal, cereal, and yogurt with fruit.

For lunch, add extra veggies to your sandwich and top a baked potato with veggies or salsa; make a vegetable soup; build a super salad with leafy greens, chopped veggies, fruit, beans/legumes, and nuts for lots of texture and flavor.

At dinner, fill half of your plate with veggies; use lots of veggies in a stir fry; grill, roast, or steam veggies as a side dish; make fruit your dessert. And, don't forget to reach for a piece of fruit or some prepared veggies as your go-to snack.

When it comes to fruits and vegetables, more is always better!



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## Vegetable Quinoa Soup

*Makes 6 Servings*

### Ingredients:

- 2 large carrots, sliced ¼ inch
- 2 stalks celery, sliced ¼ inch
- 1 onion, diced
- ¼ head of cabbage, chopped
- 2 medium zucchini, cut in half and sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
- 1 14-ounce can diced tomatoes (fire roasted preferred)
- 2 14-ounce cans beans of choice (white, black, kidney, pinto, etc.)
- ⅓ cup dry quinoa (regular or red)
- 2 teaspoons herbs de provence or 1 teaspoon each thyme and rosemary
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- 6 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- Salt and fresh cracked pepper, to taste

### Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Prepare produce and rinse under cold running water. Slice and chop vegetables.
3. In a large pot or dutch oven, heat 1 tablespoon oil; add carrots, celery, and onions and sauté for 5 minutes.
4. Add all remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, cover and turn heat to low, and simmer for 40 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.

### Nutrition Information per 1 cup serving:

184 calories; 1.3 g total fat (0.3 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat); 35 g carbohydrates; 9.6 g protein; 7.9 g fiber; 707 mg sodium; 6 g sugar.