

5 STEPS TO BUILD A STRONGER CORE WITH CHI WALKING

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Most people think walking doesn't cause injury. However, walking is a fitness activity that can be done properly--and beneficially-- or improperly, resulting in possible damage. Instruction on proper technique is needed.

Precise instruction on walking technique can help you focus on your core, so you develop greater core strength and better balance and efficiency in mobility. Of all the forms of exercise, none is more popular than walking. For good reason--stride for stride, fitness experts agree that walking provides the most health and longevity benefits. There are multiple reasons for this.

Walking is low-impact. If you use improper form, you will tire more easily because of it, but with proper form, eventually you can take longer walks. Longer walks burn more calories and help build your cardiovascular system. Walking can be done anywhere. You don't need a gym membership or fancy equipment. You just need a good pair of shoes.

Nearly 80 million Americans consider themselves walkers and the number is growing. Despite this explosion in walking, there is very little instruction available on how to walk with proper form and posture. We walked beautifully as children, but few of us have the same healthy, flexible bodies we had when we were young. For instance, when children walk, they tend to lead with their upper bodies allowing gravity to help pull them along. ChiWalking uses the principles children naturally employ—leading with your upper body. Instead, adults tend to lead with their hips and pull themselves forward with their legs. This is a big job for small muscles and adding distance to this type of walking can be a recipe for injury and pain.

USE THESE 5 PRINCIPLES OF CHI WALKING TO BUILD A STRONGER CORE:

1. Get Aligned.

Your form is totally dependent upon your posture. Align

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shoulders over hips and hips over ankles. Make sure your spine is long, tall, and straight.

2. Engage Your Core.

If you are not sure which muscles to use, laugh or cough and you will find them. Engage these muscles by keeping them pulled in during your walk.

3. Create Balance.

Your body weight should always be centered over your leading foot, so that movement initiates from your center, and the bulk of the work is done by the core muscles, rather than your legs and feet. When you are physically balanced, you are not only more efficient in your walking but also less prone to injury.

4. Make a Choice.

In ChiWalking, we choose to move forward in a different way than before. This means leading with the upper body, in balance over the stepping foot, rather than leading with the legs.

5. Move Forward.

This is where the shoe leather meets the road, where you make that commitment to take a walk today. Plan your weekly walking program so you progressively move toward your health and fitness goal.

To keep moving forward, keep your posture straight, your core engaged, your upper body balanced over your lower body and your destination in mind. Spring is almost here-- get ready to walk!

