

Top 10 Training Mistakes

1. **Over striding**

When you try to walk faster, the natural inclination is to lengthen your stride in front, reaching out further with your forward foot. This leads to a clumsy gait and results in the feet striking too hard on the ground. Your shins hurt and you really don't get anywhere faster.

The Cure:

All of the power of your walk comes from pushing with the back leg and foot. If you are trying to walk fast, concentrate on taking shorter, quicker steps. Then think of really rolling through your step with your back foot and leg, getting a good push off. The result will be faster feet and a lengthening of your stride where it does you some good - in back.

2. **The Wrong Shoes**

- Too heavy
- Stiff - soles won't bend, can't twist them.
- Over 1 year old
- Too small. The foot swells while walking

If this describes your shoes, you are setting yourself up for plantar fasciitis, muscle pulls and knee problems.

The Cure:

Get fit for the proper shoes at a technical running shoe store in your area. The athletic shoe experts will make sure you get the right shoe for over-pronation as well as one that's flexible enough for walking and sized right for the swelling everyone's feet have while walking.

3. **Flapping, Slapping, "Flat" Feet**

- Your feet hit the ground with a slap.
- You land flat-footed with each step and get no roll.
- You develop shin pain.

This means that instead of rolling through the step with your forward foot, it is flattening out prematurely. Either you are fighting stiff, heavy shoes or your shins are too weak to let you roll through the step.

The Cure:

Get flexible shoes that bend at the ball of the foot. A pair of running shoes with a low heel is best. To strengthen your shins, ankle, and lower leg, try the following exercises: Toe raises: Stand on a stair facing upstairs with your heels hanging over the edge. Dip the heels down, and

then raise them high. Repeat 10-20 times. Foot fun: Several times a day, tap your toes quickly for several seconds. Then write the alphabet in the air with your foot. Repeat with the other foot. Heel walking: As part of your warm-up, walk on your heels for 30 seconds.

4. **Look, Ma, No Arms!**

- You keep your arms still at your sides while walking, or swing them without bending them.
- You notice that your hands swell quite a bit while walking.

A normal walking motion uses the arms to counterbalance the leg motion. A walker can add power and speed by using the arms effectively. Long, straight arms act like a long pendulum, slowing you down.

The Cure

Bend your arms 90 degrees and swing them naturally back and forth opposite the leg motion.

5. **Chicken Winging and Flinging**

OK, now you know to bend your arms when you walk. But instead you swing them from side to side, cross the center of your body and extend them to endanger passersby. Sometimes your fists come up on each swing past your breast and up to your chin or your nose.

The Cure:

Keep your elbows close to your body and swing your arms mostly back and forward, as if reaching for your wallet from a back pocket on the backstroke. As they come forward, your hands should not cross the center of your body and should come up no further than your breasts. This arm motion will give power to your walk. Your feet generally move only as fast as your arms. This motion lets you concentrate on power from your rear leg without wasting motion in front of your body. It also looks far less silly.

6. **Head Down**

You are always looking down, hanging your head and staring at your feet.

The Cure

Look up! Good posture for walking allows you to breathe well and provides a long bodyline to prevent problems with your back, neck, and shoulders. Chin up when walking - it should be parallel to the ground. Your eyes should focus on the street or track 10 - 20 feet ahead. You'll avoid doggy doo-doo, find cracks in the sidewalk, spot potential muggers, and still collect the occasional coin.

7. Leaning and Swaying

- You lean forward more than 5 degrees
- You lean back.
- You have a sway back with or without a forward lean.

Somewhere you read to lean forward when walking. Or, you may be leaning back on your hips. Leaning forward or backwards or holding your back swayed can result in back pain and does not contribute to speed.

The Cure:

Stand up straight but with relaxed shoulders, chin up and parallel to the ground. Think about walking tall. Think "suck in your gut, tuck in your butt." Your back has a natural curve; do not force it into an unnatural sway with your behind sticking out and your stomach pushing forward.

8. The Wrong Clothes

- You walk at night wearing dark colored clothing with no reflective stripes or a safety vest.
- You wear too much or too little clothing. You don't wear a hat.

The Cure

To prevent becoming a car hood ornament, wear a mesh reflective safety vest bought at a local biking or running shop or put reflective strips on your night-time walking outfit. Many running shoes have reflective elements, but studies show it is best to have several reflective elements to be seen from all directions. For walking comfort, dress in layers. The inner layer should be of a fabric like polypropylene that will wick sweat away from your body to evaporate - not cotton, which holds it in next to the skin. The next layer should be insulating - a shirt or sweater that can be easily removed if you warm up. The outer layer should be a jacket that is windproof, and waterproof or water-resistant in wet climates. Hats are essential equipment. They insulate you so you warm up faster. They shield the top of your head from the sun - an area where it is hard to apply sunscreen. Hats with visors also shield your face from sun exposure.

9. Not Drinking Enough Water

You don't drink enough water before, during, and after walking.

The Cure:

A good rule of thumb is to drink every 15 minutes, consuming at least one 28 oz. bottle of fluid per hour. It is recommended that you should consume 1 bottle of sports drink for every 2 bottles of water. Prepare for your walk by drinking a tall glass of water 2 hours before you walk. After your walk, drink at least one more glass of water. Avoid caffeinated beverages before your walk,

they cause you to lose fluid, making you thirstier as well as making you take inconvenient stops along the way.

10. **Overtraining**

You walk and walk and walk. But you have lost your enthusiasm. You feel tired, irritable. You always have aches and pains. You may be overdoing it.

The Cure

Take a day off now and then to let your body repair, build up muscle, and store up some energy to get you back on the road again. To stay motivated; try changing your routes and walking with friends.