

# The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability

## What is a Pedometer and How Can I Benefit from Using One?

A pedometer is an electronic device that serves as an excellent physical activity monitoring tool. It is affordable, reliable, and can be a great motivator. The pedometer is an object that can be worn on a variety of places on the body to measure activity during the day. In general pedometers are designed to be worn at waist level around the hip area. However, they can be worn on other parts of the body making them accessible to everyone. The important factor is to wear it in the same spot everyday to track steps or movement. Pedometers can be worn daily to help measure your functional activity including transportation to and from work or school and movement during the day. They are also great tools to monitor your fitness activity including distance covered during an organized walk, run, or wheel.

Pedometers can be worn by the entire family. Children and adults can benefit from the regular tracking of their physical activity. Children and adults need to wear the pedometer on the part of their body that creates the greatest amount of movement each day. A family that is active together creates a support system for achieving physical activity goals.

### Features to Look for in a Pedometer

The top features to look for when buying a pedometer are accuracy, comfort, cost and personal preferences. Accuracy refers to tracking the correct distance traveled by movement throughout the day. *Consumer Reports* and research suggest the following brands for accuracy and function:

- Yamax Digi-Walker SW-200
- Kenz Lifecorder
- New-lifestyles NL-2000



- Sportline 330
- Yamax Digi-Walker SW-701

Comfort of the pedometer should be considered if the pedometer is going to be worn throughout the day. Pedometers can vary in price and offer a range of measurement options, such as, measuring steps, estimation of covered distances (miles or kilometers) and an estimated caloric expenditure as well. Determine which factors would motivate you to be physical active every day and provide necessary information to assist you in achieving your fitness goals. Pedometers can be found in most sporting goods stores or can be purchased directly from the manufacturer.

### Wearing a Pedometer

The proper placement for a pedometer is on your waistband so that it is located over the knee joint or inline with the crease of your pants. The pedometer needs to be placed in a position that allows it to be vertically aligned and parallel to the ground. There are alternative placement options for persons with disabilities such as the arm, wrist, ankle or shoe. Regardless of the placement keep the pedometer in a position that is parallel to the ground. The key is to continue to wear the pedometer in the same place each day to measure daily physical activity.

The pedometer needs to be placed in an area of the body that creates the most movement throughout a typical day. The pedometer may also be placed on the side of your hip if the front of your waist is not easily accessible, but keep the pedometer parallel to the ground. Once the pedometer is in place snap the case shut to obtain accurate readings.

The pedometer can be worn underneath clothing, but if wearing on your arm or wrist over a piece of clothing might prevent irritation from the pedometer or arm band. If a safety strap is available, use it to attach the pedometer safely to clothing to prevent loss. Place some type of identification on your pedometer (your name/phone number) in case it is lost.

## Tracking Physical Activity with a Pedometer

General recommendations include reaching 10,000 steps a day, but this goal may not be sustainable for some groups including older adults and people with disabilities or chronic health conditions. Research by the Department of Exercise and Wellness at Arizona State University has created suggestions for pedometer-determined physical activity in healthy adults.

< 5,000 steps/day	Sedentary Lifestyle
5,000-7,499 steps/day	Low Active
7,500-9,999 steps/day	Somewhat Active
10,000 steps/day	Active
>12,500 steps/day	Highly Active

These guidelines are not accurate for all persons so it is important to determine your starting point using the following method. Start by placing the pedometer on your body in the morning and wear it all day. At the end of the day record your steps (movement) and repeat this process for a week's time. At the end of the week take an average of your daily steps (movement) and identify a starting goal for your daily physical activity. A log for tracking your daily steps (movement) can be recorded in a variety of methods. Use a tracking method that is easiest for you to stay focused on your progress, success, and goals. Some examples include a household calendar, desk calendar, notebook, daily organizer, or log on refrigerator/bulletin board).

Measuring and being aware of your physical activity intensity level is important while wearing a pedometer. Check your heart rate and/or use the Perceived Rate of Exertion (RPE) table to determine your workload.

**Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE):** This is a scale of perceived exercise intensity. The Borg scale ranges from 6 to 20. To use the scale, monitor how you feel while exercising taking into account all sensations and feelings of physical stress, effort, and fatigue. Aim for a general goal of 12 to 14 RPE.

6	
7	Very, very light
9	Very light
11	Fairly Light
13	Somewhat hard
15	Hard
17	Very hard
19	Very, very hard
20	

## Resources to Purchase a Pedometer On-Line

NCHPAD offers the Yamax Digi-Walker SW-200 for sale online or by calling (800)-900-8086. The Yamax Digi-Walker has become the research criterion model proving consistently accurate in laboratory and field tests. The pedometer is sold through the NCHPAD WebShop for \$24.99 and includes an arm band strap. Visit <http://www.ncpad.org/ShopIndex> to access the WebShop online.

Other resources for purchasing a pedometer:

<http://www.new-lifestyles.com/index.php>

<http://www.sportline.com/products/pedometers/330-step-pedometer.html>



<http://www.ncpad.org> email@ncpad.org (800) 900-8086 (voice and tty) (205) 313-7475 (fax)

NCHPAD is headquartered at Lakeshore Foundation and is part of the UAB/Lakeshore Research Collaborative. 4000 Ridgeway Drive Birmingham, Alabama 35209. NCHPAD is funded by the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under Grant/Cooperative Agreement Number U59DD000906. NCHPAD and the UAB/Lakeshore Research Collaborative do not formally recommend the equipment listed or participation in physical activity in the absence of a physician's supervision. Individuals should investigate what equipment and physical activity best fits their needs and consult a physician before beginning any physical activity. The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC. This article was last edited 10/2012.

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Sample Activity Log

Weekly Activity Log					
Week of: _____					
Day	Distance mi/km:	Pedometer Reading	Time:	Speed:	Notes:
Sunday					
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Week Total					
Goals:					
Progress:					
Ideas:					

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