



B.C. Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association

MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

May 26, 2021



Take a Midday Break

This week's topic goes to the heart of the intent of ReFresh: a weekly idea to help you 'pause' for 10 to 15 minutes to re-energize and support your health, either through a micro behaviour, a new skill, or a new concept to embrace.

In elementary school, we know the value and importance of that short recess where energy can be released and refreshed, social connections can happen, and our brain and body get a break from the focus of the classroom. If it is good for the students, it is good for us as well!

Go for a Lunch Time Walk

With the weather warming up and the sun shining more often, a 10 – 15-minute walk after lunch is an easy way to give our bodies and brains the break they need to finish off the day strong! Here's why a brisk walk could be beneficial:

1. **Benefits for your health.** Incorporating a 30-minute walk once a day (or two 15-minute walks) provides you with many of the advantages of exercising (see [*last week's ReFresh*](#) for some helpful videos on this!)
2. **Sitting all day can be deadly.** We're designed to move! Small bursts of activity during the day go a long way toward improving your health.
3. **Gets you out into nature.** Many studies point to a positive relationship between the time spent outdoors and our mental well-being.
4. **It can be social.** Regularly connecting with others can boost happiness, reduce stress, and improve self-confidence and self-worth.
5. **Your brain will thank you.** Taking a walking break can actually help improve your focus once you get back to your desk. When you exercise, your body pumps more blood everywhere, including your brain. The extra blood and oxygen you get from exercising can actually help you perform better mentally.

Did you know that walking right after a meal, such as lunch, is good for you? It's proven to have many benefits, including:

1. **Improves digestion:** Body movement can aid your digestion by promoting stimulation of the stomach and intestines, causing food to move through more rapidly. In addition, low to moderate physical activity after eating may have a protective effect on the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.
2. **May help manage blood sugar levels:** Another notable benefit of walking after eating is improved blood sugar management. This is particularly important for people with Type 1 and 2 diabetes because exercising after eating may prevent excessive spikes in blood sugar, thus reducing the amount of insulin or oral medications required. In fact, a 2016 study in people with Type 2 diabetes found that light walking for 10 minutes after each meal was superior to walking for 30 minutes at any one time for blood sugar management.
3. **May reduce heart disease risk:** More specifically, regular exercise may lower your blood pressure and LDL (bad) cholesterol, while also reducing your risk of a stroke

or heart attack. One study suggests that several small bouts of exercise throughout the day may be superior to one continuous bout of exercise for lowering blood triglycerides, a risk factor for heart disease.

4. **May help regulate blood pressure:** Walking after meals may also help regulate blood pressure to a certain extent. Several studies associate three daily 10-minute walks with reduced blood pressure levels. What's more, several 10-minute walks throughout the day appear to be more beneficial for lowering blood pressure than one continuous session.

To learn more, watch this short video on the value of walking after meals in this [TIME Health article](#).

How to Best Enjoy Your Midday Walk

Find a route: Select a route that has fewer street crossings and stops for traffic. If you know how much distance you can walk in 15 minutes, you can map out a circular route. If not, you may want a shorter route that you can repeat multiple times.

Bring athletic shoes: You could walk in whatever footwear you happen to wear to work or school. But to get a good brisk walking stride, it's best to change into athletic walking shoes or running shoes.

Invite others to join you: Solo walking is great, but you may be more consistent in walking if you have a lunchtime walking buddy. You won't find as many excuses to skip your walk if your friend is ready to get going. Get creative with your walking buddy. Although it's nice to connect with someone walking beside you, you can also take your phone and headphones, and have a walking buddy join you across town – or heck – even across the country! What a great way to stay in touch with someone you may not see that often.

Start with a warm-up: Try an easy walking pace for one to three minutes. Use this time to shake out the kinks if you have been sitting or standing all morning.

Have good walking posture: Energize your walking by relaxing and loosening your shoulders and standing upright, with stomach sucked in and pelvis tilted slightly forward. You want your chin up and eyes forward.

Do a [short stretching routine](#) after a couple of minutes of walking. You can also save the stretching to do after your walk or as its own exercise activity at another time.

Start during today's lunch hour! Set a goal to get out two times a week, then three, then continue progressing. You may find that your midday recess makes a world of difference in how you finish your day.

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the [ReFresh](#) series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

Sources

- [“Top 5 Reasons Why You Should Walk at Lunch”](#) (A Healthier Michigan)
- [“The Case for Taking a Walk After Eating”](#) (TIME)
- [“Is Walking After Eating Good for You?”](#) (Healthline)