

What is the Walk Across Illinois?

The Walk Across Illinois Challenge is an easy way to improve your health, one step at a time. Obesity, high blood pressure and inadequate exercise are community health problems which challenge us all. By encouraging everyone in Illinois to walk on average just one-half mile daily for a year, the Walk Across Illinois initiative can help boost the life expectancy and well-being of all Illinois residents.

Why is it 167 miles long?

The width of the State of Illinois between the Mississippi River in Rock Island and the Lake Michigan shore in Chicago is 167 miles. These two great waterways have helped define Illinois' heritage.

What inspired the idea?

In August 2001, Pat Quinn and his 78-year old doctor - Dr. Quentin Young - hiked 167 miles from the Mississippi River in Rock Island to the Lake Michigan shore in Chicago to promote decent health care for everyone.

How does it work?

1. Register at www.WalkAcrossIllinois.org. Each day or week, estimate how many miles you've walked. It can include every day trips to the store or maybe a walk around the block after dinner.
2. Enter your mileage on the website. Your progress will be tracked as if you are walking across the width of Illinois. You'll receive periodic health tips, hiking ideas and fun facts about walking.
3. When you've completed 167 miles, you'll receive a "Walk Across Illinois" certificate.

What happens when I've reached 167 miles?

You'll feel great! Plus, you'll receive a "Walk Across Illinois" certificate. And if you feel like it, you can start over again!

When can I start?

You can start today!

Is there any cost to register?

There is no charge to participate in Walk Across Illinois. The project is sponsored by the Office of Illinois Governor Pat Quinn.

What are the health benefits to walking?

A 30-minute walk by a person of average weight burns 220 calories. Walking reduces the chance of heart disease, prevents bone loss and increases life expectancy. Walking cuts public health care costs for all taxpayers.

Are there any famous walkers?

Famous people who walked for a cause include Johnny Appleseed (who walked from Pennsylvania across Illinois to Iowa planting trees), “Granny D” Haddock (who walked from the Pacific to Atlantic Ocean to promote citizen democracy), and Mahatma Gandhi (who organized the 165-mile Salt March to protest unfair British taxes in India).

A Michigan man - Dave Kunst - is the first person known to have walked around planet Earth. It took him four years and three months to walk 14,450 miles, and he wore out 21 pairs of shoes. And in 1994, Forrest Gump began his cross-country trek “because he felt like it”!

Finally, to show that everyday walks can really add up, consider the example of major league baseball star Jim Thome. This Peoria native has drawn 1,212 walks in his career through the 2004 season. At 90 feet per walk, he’s trekked 109,080 feet, or nearly 20 miles on bases on balls!

Are there any good places to hike in Illinois?

Illinois has 270 different hiking trails that total more than 700 miles. Some hikes can take days such as the 155-mile Hennepin Canal Trail while others can be completed in just a few hours. With 63 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, thousands of miles of riverbank paths, and many interesting neighborhood walks, Illinois residents don’t need to travel far for a vigorous trek.

Check the www.WalkAcrossIllinois.org website for specific ideas about hiking.

I’m not into hiking...what other ways can I get in my miles?

Some ideas include an after-dinner stroll, morning walks in shopping malls, visiting a museum, using stairs instead of elevators and entering a walk-a-thon for your favorite cause. Also, each of the following activities is equivalent to one mile:

Climbing stairs (15 minutes)
Gardening (30 minutes)
Running sports (15 minutes)
Shoveling snow (30 minutes)
Dancing (20 minutes)
Golf (4-5 holes)
Lawn mowing (20 minutes)

House Cleaning (30 minutes)
Frisbee (30 minutes)
Bowling (30 minutes)
Jumping Rope (30 minutes)
Aerobics (15 minutes)
Elliptical Machine (15 minutes)
Wheelchair Exercises (30 Minutes)