QUINCY PHYSICAL THERAPY

8-Week Starter Walking Plan

For building walking back into your routine, including people managing everyday low back pain

Who this is for

This plan is for generally healthy adults who are just starting out, or who are returning to walking after a back-pain flare that has settled. Walking is gentle, free, and easy to do close to home.

How to use it

Follow one row of the table each week. Walk at an easy pace. Use the “How did it feel?” check after each walk to decide whether to move up, repeat a week, or ease back.

Your 8 weeks

Week	Minutes per walk	Walks per week	Effort guide	Tip for the week
1	**10 min**	4–5	Easy. You can talk in full sentences.	Pick a flat route near home.
2	**12 min**	5	Easy. Full sentences.	Walk at the same time each day.
3	**15 min**	5	Easy. Full sentences.	Stand tall and let your arms swing.
4	**18 min**	5	Easy to comfortable.	Try a walking buddy or a podcast.
5	**20 min**	5	Comfortable. Short sentences are fine.	Add a gentle hill or a new route.
6	**24 min**	5	A little quicker. You can still talk.	Take slightly longer, steady steps.
7	**27 min**	5	Brisk, but you can still talk.	Mix easy and brisk stretches.
8	**30 min**	5	Brisk, but you can still talk.	Celebrate! Keep this going.

Short on time? Split any walk into two shorter ones, like two 15-minute walks. **Your pace may be slower or faster. That’s okay.** Walking at a pace that feels right for you is what counts. If a week feels like too much, repeat it before moving on.

Why these numbers? About 30 minutes, five days a week is the goal used in the WalkBack trial (Pocovi et al., *Lancet*, 2024), which built up gradually over about 6 months alongside physical therapist coaching. This 8-week plan is a general starting guide and was not tested in that study.

How did it feel? A simple check

After each walk, and the next morning, ask yourself how your body feels.

● Green: keep going
You feel fine, or you have mild soreness that settles within about 24 hours. Keep going, or move up to the next week.

● Yellow: ease off
Soreness lingers, or your symptoms feel a bit worse the next day. Repeat the same week, or shorten your walks for a few days.

● Red: stop and get help
A big jump in pain, or new symptoms. Stop walking and contact a doctor or physical therapist.

QUINCY PHYSICAL THERAPY

Your log, tips, and when to get help

Weekly walking log

Check a box for each walk you finish. Circle how it felt: **G**reen, **Y**ellow, or **R**ed.

Week / goal	Walk 1	Walk 2	Walk 3	Walk 4	Walk 5	How it felt
1 · 10 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
2 · 12 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
3 · 15 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
4 · 18 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
5 · 20 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
6 · 24 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
7 · 27 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R
8 · 30 min	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	G Y R

Tips to make it stick

- **Wear comfortable shoes** with good support and room for your toes.
- **Start on flat routes.** Save hills and rough ground for later.
- **Keep it close to home.** A short loop near your door is easy to repeat.
- **Walk with a friend** or family member. It makes the time fly.
- **Off days happen.** Just pick the plan back up at your next walk.
- **Add strength work.** Walking pairs well with simple strengthening, which we can tailor to you.

When to get medical care

Most back pain is not dangerous, but get prompt medical care if you have:

- New numbness or weakness in your legs
- Loss of bladder or bowel control, or numbness in the groin or saddle area
- Back pain with a fever or unexplained weight loss
- Back pain after a fall or significant injury
- Severe pain that keeps getting worse
- **Chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness while walking.** Stop and get care right away.

Want a plan built for you? Our doctors of physical therapy work one-on-one with every patient.

Quincy Physical Therapy
300 Congress St, Suite 316, Quincy, MA 02169
Phone: (617) 481-2000 · quincypt.com
Mon–Fri 7:00 am–7:00 pm · Sat 8:00 am–12:00 pm

Please note: This handout is general education, not a personal medical plan. Check with your doctor or physical therapist before starting if you have a heart or lung condition, recent surgery, or other health concerns. Stop and get care if something doesn't feel right.

Reference: Pocovi NC, et al. WalkBack trial of a walking and education program to prevent low back pain recurrence. *Lancet*. 2024.