Get Ireland Walking

Support Materials

Active Community Walking Programme

an initiative of

in association with our Partner Organisations
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Why Walking

Walking is the easiest way to get moving, get active and get happy. You don’t need any gear, or to pay any fees - you just need to commit time and effort throughout your week. (whatever you can to get started)

Walking is suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels. You can tailor it to suit yourself, you can walk anywhere, at anytime at a pace that suits you and for a distance you can manage.

Walking is good for our physical health and mental wellbeing

Walking and our Physical Health:

- Increases mobility in joints and builds bone strength
- Helps manage weight

- Improves balance and co-ordination
- Tones and strengthens muscles
- Improves circulation
- Aids digestion
- Helps fight off coughs and colds
- Being active can improve health conditions

Being active can improve a number of specific health conditions including:

- Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease
- Prevents and controls management of diabetes
- Reduces and controls blood pressure
- Reduces the risk of stroke and certain cancers
- Reduces and manages obesity
- Maintains mobility and independent living
- Enhances and protects brain function
- Reduces risk of osteoporosis
- Eases and manages pain from arthritis
Why Walking

Walking Works Report:
Overall, in the UK, physical inactivity is the fourth largest contributor to ill health. Physical inactivity is now the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality, accounting for 6% of deaths.

Physical activity stimulates the release of body chemicals called endorphins, which act as natural pain killers, reduce stress and produce feelings of wellbeing.

• Walking Works (Walking for Health report 2014)
• Being active can promote a sense of achievement and motivation, improve your social life and reduce anger and frustration.

Physically active people have up to a 30% reduced risk of becoming depressed and staying active helps those who are depressed recover. In older people, staying active can improve cognitive function, memory, attention and processing speed and reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

Walking and our Mental Health and Wellbeing:
• Meet new people and make new friends
• Being in the outdoors and enjoying the fresh air
• Improves confidence and self-esteem
• Improves mood and reduces anxiety
• A great way to de-stress and re-energise
• Relieves depressive symptoms
• Taking a break...
No matter how old you are, how fit you are, or how busy you are, walking works.

No matter where or when you walk, the most important thing is to aim for a pace that slightly raises your heart beat makes you breathe a little faster and feel a little warmer - but you can still talk - then you’re doing well.

You can be spontaneous about walking, it doesn’t require much planning, just put on some comfortable shoes and a coat and head out the door.

You can get started by building walking into your daily routine or by setting aside some time for a social/recreational walk. Think about what you do every day and find a regular time when you can fit in a walk.

Here are some suggestions to help you get walking:

• Go for a walk with friends, family and/or neighbours and have time to chat.
• Join a group and meet new people, check out our listing of walking groups to find one in your area at www.getirelandwalking.ie
• Walk the dog.
• Park away from the shops, work or school and walk the rest of the way or better still leave the car at home.
• Get off the bus one or two stops before your destination and walk the rest of the way.
• If you are planning a day out remember to include a walk as part of the day/event.

If you have been diagnosed with a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis or have symptoms such as chest pain or pressure, dizziness or joint pain, talk to your doctor for advice on getting active and managing your condition.

You could also contact the support organisation for your condition and they may be able to offer advice or assistance.

Start out gently, don’t overdo it, but do enjoy it.

How Much to Walk?

For health benefits adults need to be active for at least 30 minutes a day on five days a week. Children and young people need to be active for 60 minutes a day. (National Physical Activity Guidelines)

You don’t have to do the 30 minutes all at once. You can build up to it, or more, a day by doing shorter session of for example:
3 sessions of 10 minutes
Or
2 sessions of 15 minutes
If you are beginning to become active try starting by walking for a few minutes, even every second day, at a pace that you can manage. If you can get out walking regularly and enjoy it, over time you can gradually increase the length and pace of your walk until you reach the adult guidelines and want to take on more.

What pace should I walk at?
Start at a pace that you can manage and feel comfortable at. Gradually build up to a pace that makes you:

- Breathe a little faster
- Feel a little warmer
- Makes your heart beat a little faster
- But you should still be able to talk and feel comfortable.

How can I establish a healthy habit of walking?
Now that you've started walking you'll want to keep going. The following tips will help you to make walking a habit:

- Arrange to walk with a friend or group.
- Think before you drive the car for short journeys.
- Keep a record of how far or how long you walk each day and week. This will let you see how easily you can increase your level of activity.
- Take note of how you feel after walking and remind yourself of that positive feeling of achievement.
- Take the Get Ireland Walking 21 Day Walking Challenge.
- Set goals for your walks and reward yourself on achieving them.
- Park away from the shops, work or school and walk the rest of the way or better still leave the car at home.
- Get off the bus one or two stops before your destination and walk the rest of the way.
- Use stairs instead of lifts.
Taking Steps to Start Walking

- Walk with your family for recreation and normal routine trips.
- Vary your route to keep it interesting.
- Get comfortable shoes and some rain gear so that the weather doesn't interfere with your plans.
- Always have your walking shoes near.
It can be fun and an adventure looking for walks as you get to discover places you never knew existed. Here are some suggestions of places you might check out.

Generally you are looking for walks that are more-or-less on the flat.

Do you know somebody in the area who walks and knows the locality? Perhaps they can give you some tips and ideas.

For those living in an urban area

Can you make up an interesting walk around local streets?

What about the local housing estates? Are there interconnecting passages or pathways between them you could use to make a walk?

Is there a park in the area with a network of paths inside where you could make a route?

For those living in a rural area

Are there quiet local roads and lanes around that could be used?

Is there a public forest nearby with sign-posted routes where you could walk?

Is there a river or canal in the vicinity where you could include a section along the banks or even walk up one side and back the other?

Do you have a local sports club or GAA pitch in the area which you could walk around? If it is floodlit, could you walk there at night?

Do you have any of the Irish Heart Foundation’s Sli na Sláinte routes? Check out www.irishheart.ie to see if there is one in your area. They are easy to follow and mostly have signs at 1km intervals.

Why not check out www.irishtrails.ie to see if any walks are listed near you? Walks on this website have directional signage and are of different lengths, from as short as a few hundred metres up to many kilometres, and varying levels of difficulty, starting with family and buggy friendly on up through Easy and Moderate.

www.coillteoutdoors.ie will give you information on walks in the Coillte forests. They also have directional signage and are of different lengths and levels of difficulty.

You could look at indoor venues for days when the
weather is very bad, maybe a community hall or a shopping centre.

When you are looking for places to walk, bear in mind that you want to stay safe. So:
Stay off busy roads and those where traffic travels fast.
Avoid obvious dangers, such as exposed cliffs, tidal beaches, areas that flood, farm animals and working areas such as farms, building sites, etc.
If walking at night, choose places that have good lighting.

FINDING A WALKING GROUP

Walking in a group can really help you to get started, stay motivated and enjoy walking. To find a walking group in your area, check out our ‘Supports Near You’ page.
You could also keep an eye on your local papers and newsletters or on notice boards in your area for details of any walking groups nearby. Social media sites are also worth checking out.

FINDING A WALKING EVENT

It can be great fun and very sociable to attend walking events. For any that might interest you, follow the link on the ‘Supports Near You’ page.
You may also find details of events by keeping an eye on your local papers and newsletters and looking at notice boards or checking out social media sites.

ENJOY THE ADVENTURE!
Dealing with Excuses

If you’re finding it difficult to get active through walking, these tips will help you to overcome some of the excuses we often use to ourselves.

"I just don’t have time walk"
It only takes 30 minutes to do a walk that will help to maintain your health. Just open your front door, head outside, and walk. There is no extra time needed to travel to a venue or to prepare.

Try to fit walking into your daily routine or use it as an opportunity to meet a friend and catch up. Let family and friends know about your plans and ask them to support you to stick with the routine.

"After a busy day, I'm just too tired to walk"
Try fitting in a walk when you feel most energetic, this could be early in the day. Walking actually gives you more energy! Try it out and notice the difference in your energy levels for the day.

"I have an illness and really don’t feel like walking"
At your next visit to your GP, tell him/her that you would like to become more active. You could also check out the health promotion organisations for advice on your illness and walking.

"I'm really unfit - I never walk"
Walking is one of the easiest ways to get active. You can set your own pace and length of walk. Over time, you can gradually increase this.

"I'm too old to start walking"
It’s never too late to start walking. Walking regularly can help to maintain your physical health.

"I'm overweight and wouldn't feel comfortable walking"
Combining walking and healthy eating is a really good way to lose weight. Walking is a very safe way to start to get active and people of all ages, shapes, and fitness levels are embracing walking as a way to get active and shed the weight.
Dealing with Excuses

"My family and friends aren’t interested in walking"
Chat with them about walking, its benefits, and why you want to try it out. Invite them to join you; they might find they enjoy it too. Ask them to support your efforts to get active through walking.

Find a local walking group (check out our ‘Support Near You’ webpage) and join like-minded people for a walk.

"I have too many family obligations to go walking"
Sometimes, we have to be creative in carving out time for ourselves. One idea may be to trade babysitting time with friends and neighbours.

Walk with the family and introduce some fun elements to pass the time for them. Play games like I-spy, treasure hunt, etc. while walking. This way, everyone will enjoy the outing and get some exercise at the same time.

We hope we have included all possible excuses! If you’d like a suggestion around an excuse that is preventing you from taking up walking, let us know and we’ll add it in! Email your suggestions to info@getirelandwalking.ie

"I just can’t get motivated to get moving"
Try planning ahead - arrange to meet a friend for a walk. That way, you will be more likely to go rather than change your mind at the last minute.

Commit to the 21 Day Walking Challenge or any other walking challenge.

Join a walking group, where you can support each other to get walking and keep walking.
WHAT DO I WEAR?
Regular runners or walking shoes are fine for walking - they just need to be comfortable.
Clothing should be comfortable too - you don’t need anything fancy, just a jacket to protect you from the rain. If it’s not raining, a light jacket will keep out the wind so you stay warmer. Fleeces are great for keeping you warm and easy to tie around your waist if you get too hot, while layers of loose light clothes instead of one thick one allow you to control your temperature more easily.

Wearing a warm hat, gloves and a scarf when it’s cold will make your walk more comfortable and a sun hat will protect you in the summer. You can take items on and off depending on how you feel.
Some people like to carry an umbrella either instead of or in addition to a rain jacket.
If you wear a high visibility jacket or armband, particularly walking around the local roads, you will be more easily seen.

WHAT IF I AM OUT AT NIGHT OR AT DUSK?
High visibility reflective clothing or an armband will mean you can be more easily seen by passing traffic. If walking on roads, it’s best to stay on the right hand side and keep well in to the edge. Carrying a light will make it easier for you to find your way as well as helping others to see you. Or you might prefer to walk in a well-lit area or where there are other people around.

DO I NEED TO BRING ANYTHING?
Bringing a small backpack will mean you don’t have to carry things in your hands or pockets.
It’s good to carry a mobile phone - you can use it to take photographs, to help track your time, and to call for help if you need any assistance. If walking on your own, it’s always good to tell somebody where you are going and how long you expect to be.
It’s wise to bring a bottle of water you can sip as you go along.
MAKING THE EXPERIENCE FUN
Why not track your walk - there are apps available to do this.

You can enjoy nature - trees, flowers, scenery and wildlife! Even in city parks, you may see squirrels, foxes, or birds.

If you are walking with other people, you can chat and catch up on their latest news. Or if you enjoy listening to music, you could bring it with you; just check that you can hear the traffic.

If you are walking with children, making it into an adventure or playing a game should make the experience more enjoyable for all of you.

PREPARING FOR YOUR WALK
Doing a short stretching warm-up at the start will help limber up your body; a short cool-down at the end is also beneficial.

KEEPING MOTIVATED
Keeping a record of your walks will show you how much you have done.

If you have an arrangement to walk regularly with somebody else, it’s easier to keep going.

Starting to walk at a slow pace and gradually increasing it will help you gain confidence - start off too fast and you may not finish the walk or be put off.
Why Set up a Walking Group?

People are twice as likely to walk if they have friends to encourage them to walk.
While walking offers many physical and mental benefits, walking in a group offers additional social benefits

Walking in a group can really help you to get started, stay motivated and enjoy walking.

- Social support increased time spend in activity by approx 44%
- Frequency of exercise increased by approx 20%
- Aerobic capacity increased by approx 5%

Increased walking is associated with increased social interaction, reduced crime and fear of crime, increased perceptions of safety and the development of social capital - the network of interactions between individuals and their communities.

Most research suggests that those who walk in groups are more likely to stay walking. People set up and join walking groups for all sorts of reasons, it may be that:

- They are fed up of walking on their own: Walking group members can help to keep each other motivated. If your enthusiasm is low other members can encourage you to go for a walk.
- They want to meet and get to know people in their area: Being a member of a walking group is sociable and fun. Walking with a group can feel more like a social event or special time for you. You can chat with your friends even while walking at a brisk pace.
- They feel safer walking in a group: Walking in a group can help you to feel safer and give you the confidence to walk in different areas and at different times.
- They want to find new places and routes for walking: Walking groups often explore different routes and areas. Being a member will help you
Why Set up a Walking Group?

to discover new walks in your area and further afield.

- They want to become more physically active
- They want to lose weight
- They want to bring members of their community together. It brings people together from different backgrounds for a common purpose. It promotes neighbourliness and social interaction
- It can increase feelings of independence and reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation
- It is socially inclusive; walking is a very accessible activity
- It promotes a sense of place and local pride, thereby helping to enhance community spirit.
Steps to start your Walking Group

Walking with other people, be they family, friends or neighbours really works! It’s sociable, good for the community, keeps us motivated, and helps everyone to establish a regular walking routine.

A walking group can be simply a few friends getting together weekly to walk, or something bigger like a community walking programme where walks are organised weekly for anyone to join in on.

A Community Walking Group would usually

- Be open for people to join in.
- Have walks happening weekly on safe accessible routes in the locality.
- Offer walks ranging from short/easy walks (30 minutes) to longer ones.
- Ensure all walks are organised well.
- Have a simple organisation structure in place.
- Be registered with Get Ireland Walking.

Steps to Start a Community Walking Group

**Step 1: Start Local - Start Small**
Identify a nice walking route in your local area (say a 2km-5km loop walk) and kick off walking with a small group.

**Step 2: Kick Start a Community Walking Group**
Ask friends, colleagues and neighbours if they’d like to join or form a walking group. Drum up interest by putting up posters in local shops, post offices, sports centres, or community centres (see Factsheet *Getting the Word Out*).

Host a kick-off meeting in the local community centre or a public place, inviting people along who might be interested in supporting and establishing a local walking group.
Step 3: Agree Structure, Plan, & Set Goals

Decide when, where, how long, and how often you'll walk together. Identify roles within the group, group coordinator, walk leaders, etc. Agree general guidelines for each walk.

Exchange contact information and agree on a starting date for the first community walk and a weekly walk schedule for the group.

Set group goals such as the number of walks you want to organise each week, the number of people you’d like to see out walking, the number of walk leaders you’d like to have, the walking distance or time you’d like to reach as a group each week or month. Encourage members to also set individual goals, like the 21 Day Walk Challenge.

Keep a record of this and review it regularly. This information can help when developing further plans for the group.

Step 4: Register Your Group with Get Ireland Walking

Be part of the national initiative to encourage more walking across Ireland by registering your group on www.getirelandwalking.ie. You can also avail of insurance cover for your group (see Insurance Factsheet) and receive updates on what's happening around the country once you register.

Step 5: Get Walking

Organise your weekly walks, taking note of the number of people walking and joining each week (see Forms for Groups Factsheet). Explore options for training walk leaders and group organisers through your County Local Sports Partnership office, the Irish Heart Foundation and our other Partner Organisations. (See our Training Factsheet).

Step 6: Maintain Momentum - Mix it up

Keep the group interesting by joining or organising charity walks, joining 5k and 10k events, walking in new areas and linking in with other walking groups in your county or neighbouring counties (See Going and Growing Factsheet).

Promote your group within the community in the local paper, etc. to encourage new people to get involved.
Step 7: Celebrate

It’s a great achievement to establish a walking group and it should be celebrated! Don’t miss the opportunity to have a regular social get together after a walk or walking event and celebrate your group’s achievements.

Good luck with setting up your group!
Training Opportunities

Organising training and sharing information on walking and related topics can be a really useful tool to help establish a walking group in your area. It can also help to energise, motivate and inform members of an existing walking group.

This factsheet outlines the main training opportunities that are available for walking groups. These training courses are ideal for anyone who is currently part of an existing walking group wishing to up-skill or those starting from scratch wishing to establish a walking group and train to lead the group.

Training for Group organisers and leaders

Walking Group organisers and leaders play a very important and valuable role in the success of a local walking group. The most successful community-based walking groups have local people who have an understanding of their community, play a key role in networking, promoting, organising, reviewing, and sustaining walking activity. The role of the Community Walk Leader is to lead a safe and enjoyable walk. There are a number of training courses available to enable and empower you to undertake and most importantly enjoy organising and leading a local walking group.

Irish Heart Foundation - Community Walk Leader Training Level 1

This training is primarily aimed at people wishing to lead a walking group or promote walking in their community or workplace. The course comprises of a weekend of training and then a follow up 4 week walking programme to try out your new walking leaders skills.

The course will commence at 9.00am on Saturday and finish at 2pm Sunday.

Course content:

- Current physical activity guidelines for adults and how they relate to walking
- The main elements of a health-enhancing walking session
- Prescribing walking programmes suitable for people of different fitness levels
- Advice on issues such as posture, technique, stretching, intensity, clothing, etc.
- Safety issues and risk assessment
Training Opportunities

- Planning walking sessions and programmes
- How to start your own walking group
- Practical Walking Sessions.

Your Local Sports Partnership will also have information about these courses and their availability locally (for Local Sports Partnership contact details log on to www.getirelandwalking.ie/findgroup).

Focused Community Walk Leader Training

A number of organisations active in the promotion of physical activity to specific target groups provide Community Walk Leader Training that addresses the specific needs of their target audience. For information on these training courses contact:

- Arthritis Ireland - www.arthritisireland.ie or call 01 6618188
- Age and Opportunity - www.ageandopportunity.ie or call 01 8057709
- Local Sports Partnership - www.getirelandwalking.ie/findgroup

Irish Heart Foundation - Community Walk Leader Training Level 2

This Course aims to enhance the knowledge, skills and competence of those who have completed Community Walking Leader Training Level 1 and are registered Irish Heart Foundation Community Walking Leaders. The training enables you to lead a safe, enjoyable trek of no more than 2 hours, in daylight, on a number of specified, easy–moderate Coillte Trails and Fáilte Ireland Loops. The course comprises of a weekend of training and a follow up 4 walk leader.

To find out more about both these training courses and when the next course will be run in your area contact the Irish Heart Foundation at tcurran@irishheart.ie or call Tara on 01-6685001 or visit www.irishheart.ie/sli
Lowland Leader Award
The Lowland Leader Award is a nationally accredited scheme developed and administered by the five Mountain Training boards across Ireland and the UK.

The award is designed to train and assess those who wish to lead groups on day walks in lowland countryside and woodland in summer conditions. This award complements and supports the other walking awards administered by Mountaineering Ireland - the Walking Group Leader Award (also known as the Moorland Leader Award in the UK) and the Mountain Leader Award.

For further information on this award please see www.mountaineering.ie

Training for All
Irish Heart Foundation - Get into Walking
This workshop has been designed for people who would like to start walking for fitness and for those who want to ensure that they’re getting the maximum health benefits from walking. The Workshop was developed by the Irish Heart Foundation and it is delivered in your community by the HSE and Local Sports Partnerships.

The ‘Get into Walking’ workshop is a one day training course which aims to.

- Encourage you to walk more often
- Teach you how to get the maximum health benefits from your walk
- Inform you of the many different types of walking routes available
- Encourage you to form/join a walking group in your local area

If you would like to find out more about the ‘Get into Walking’ workshop or find a workshop in your area please contact tcurran@irishheart.ie or call Tara on 01-6685001

Get Ireland Walking - Active Community Walking Programme
If you would like to get a walking group started in your area but don’t have experience of setting up a community group this programme will help you to raise awareness of walking in your community and enable a group of local people to work together to set up and sustain a community walking group.

The programme aims to support the creation of vibrant walking communities throughout Ireland. The programme will work with communities to increase the capacity and potential of people with low levels of physical activity to become more active through walking.

During the programme individual and social
barriers that people face concerning being active within their local area will be addressed. Communities will be supported in the experience of walking with a group and in developing an action plan for walking in their local area.

During the initial year, 2015, of this programme it will be available to communities in 12 counties. To find out if this programme is available in your area contact Get Ireland Walking at info@getirelandwalking.ie or on 01 6251109.

First Aid Training
While walking is a very low risk physical activity, injuries can occur. Knowing first aid is a vital ingredient to making your walk a safer and more enjoyable experience for everyone. Contact your Local Sports Partnership to find out about first aid training in your area.

Please just remember that: Walkers should be reminded that a person’s own health is their own personal responsibility. Walk Leaders or other volunteers are not there to assess walkers health or provide medical intervention should things go wrong. All volunteers are expected to reasonably do is call the emergency services (999 or 112) should something go wrong. Any administration of first aid will be at the judgement of the individuals present and limited to their own knowledge, capacity and / or confidence.

Walking groups that are supported locally are more likely to stay walking and walkers who feel supported and energised become the best advocates for walking in their community. Your involvement as a Walking Group organiser/Leader is greatly appreciated so do remember to access support and training and to tap into local networks to help keep you motivated and enjoying your role in keeping your community walking.
Now you have your group, where do you go for a walk?

It can be fun and an adventure looking for walks as you get to discover places you never knew existed. Remember to check with other members of the group - they may have suggestions or may like to help in finding suitable walking routes.

Here are some suggestions of places you might check out:

Generally, you are looking for walks that are more-or-less on the flat.

- Do you know somebody in the area who walks and knows the locality? Perhaps they can give you some tips and ideas.

- For those living in an urban area
  - Are there quiet local roads and lanes around local streets?
  - What about the local housing estates? Are there interconnecting passages or pathways between them you could use to link them up?
  - Is there a park in the area with a network of paths inside where you could make a walk?

- For those living in a rural area
  - Are there quiet local roads and lanes around that could be used?
  - Is there a public forest nearby with signposted routes where you could walk?
  - Is there a river or canal in the vicinity where you could include a section along the banks or even walk up one side and back the other?

- Do you have a local sports club or GAA pitch in the area which you could walk around? If it is floodlit, could you walk there at night?

- Do you have any of the Irish Heart Foundation’s Slí na Sláinte routes? Check out www.irishheart.ie to see if there is one in your area. They are easy to follow and mostly have signs at 1km intervals.

- Why not check out www.irishtrails.ie to see if any walks are listed near you. Walks on this website have directional signage and are
of different lengths, from as short as a few hundred metres up to many kilometres, and varying levels of difficulty, starting with family and buggy friendly on up through Easy and Moderate.

- [www.coillteoutdoors.ie](http://www.coillteoutdoors.ie) will give you information on walks in the Coillte forests. They also have directional signage and are of different lengths and levels of difficulty.

- You could look at indoor venues for days when the weather is very bad, maybe a community hall or a shopping centre.

When you are looking for places to walk, bear in mind that you want everybody to stay safe. So:

- Stay off busy roads and those where traffic travels fast.
- Avoid obvious dangers, such as exposed cliffs, tidal beaches, areas that flood, farm animals and working areas such as farms, building sites, etc.
- If walking at night, choose places that have good lighting.
- Check out the walk before the group heads off so as everyone knows what to expect.

Urban Area - Mainly in a Park

Rural Area - Country Lanes

Photo Credited to Doneraile Online

ENJOY THE ADVENTURE OF RESEARCHING YOUR WALK!
Getting the word out

Promote Your Walking Group

Keeping it local

The easiest way to get the word out about a walking group is word-of-mouth within the local community. Try to identify relevant local places to promote your group. You could display a simple sign in business windows. Examples could include your local shop, butcher or pharmacy, the local library and your local churches. Your local café could even be used as the group’s start/end point which would enable you to finish with a social tea/coffee.

By informing local businesses about the group’s existence, they will be able to help promote your group and spread the word across your community. If you provide them with your contact details, they will be able to pass them onto people they are speaking to who express an interest in getting active or in joining a walking group.

Community notes section - church newsletter - local radio

As a follow on from getting your local community involved, ask to have your group’s contact details and information added to any community newsletters that are distributed locally. This can be done free of charge and should generate a good response from readers.

Registering on www.getirelandwalking.ie

By registering with Get Ireland Walking, you can have your group listed on the website, www.getirelandwalking.ie. This will allow visitors to the website to see your walking group in their county and provide them with the contact details in order to join the group. This service will also be promoted by your county’s Local Sports Partnership.

Social media

You could also set up a simple social media profile e.g. a Facebook page. This will allow you to keep
GETTING THE WORD OUT - PROMOTE YOUR WALKING GROUP

in contact with the group members free of charge and will allow members to interact with each other outside of the walking occasions.

It can also be used to advertise upcoming courses that may be of interest to your members such as walk leader training, first aid, etc.

Other groups
It can be a great idea to approach existing groups in your community, such as the local choir, GAA, and other social, cultural and sporting clubs, etc. Existing groups already have a structure in place, have a membership base and can easily help you to promote your walking group. They will be able to offer their members an opportunity to improve their wellbeing and, overall, it will have a positive effect on your local community.

Your social circle
Very often, people will be excited and encouraged to join a group if there is a friendly, recognisable face representing it. Be proactive when meeting old friends and new, tell them about your walking group or idea of setting one up, you’d never know who might be interested in joining and helping you out. When you meet other people out walking, you could stop them for a quick chat, tell them of your plan and pass on your details should they be interested. Mention it to the cashier in shops you visit, your family members, even your postman and you should have no problem building and maintaining your group.

Routine
Having a consistent routine for your walking group will also help to promote your presence. If your group walks each week on the same day at the same time and from the same location, potential new members will find it easier to come along. This will also save the need for weekly texts, emails, and phone calls to confirm when the walk is happening.

Get Ireland Active
You can also promote your group by submitting details of your walks and special events to www.getirelandactive.ie. An event in your local community can be a huge help to you in order to maintain a presence and local business will always be grateful if something is organised in the local area.

Organise a walking event
An event can help get the word out and give people an opportunity to meet the group and try out walking with them before having to make a commitment to regular walks. It can be a good idea to use a walking event to raise funds for a local charity, etc. as this will also encourage people to come along to the event.
The Get Ireland Walking Initiative has put in place an insurance scheme for registered volunteer walk leaders and walking group co-ordinators. The scheme aims to provide an appropriate level of protection and peace of mind for people leading or organising group walks.

**Insured by?**
The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme is provided by Lloyds through O’Driscoll O’Neill (www.odon.ie) brokers.

**Who is covered under the Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme?**
Once a walking group’s request to register with Get Ireland Walking has been approved and the names of volunteer walk leaders and co-ordinators have been submitted to Get Ireland Walking, the insurance cover will be put in place (except for those groups that choose to opt out). The insurance will apply to the named volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators.

Walking Groups are to renew their details with Get Ireland Walking by confirming the volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators that are involved in the group.

**Type of cover provided?**
The Insurance Scheme provides €6,500,000 in public liability cover.

The Public Liability cover protects volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators in the event that a legal claim is brought against them alleging negligence on their part when leading or co-ordinating a group walk.

The policy gives protection to the individual volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators in the case of a claim being made against them by a third party, such as a member of the public or a walker.

For a claim to be successful, the claimant must be able to prove negligence.

Incidents will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Insurer.

**Insurer stipulations**
This cover is limited to public paths, public roads, lowland walking trails and looped walks below 300 metres.

Cover operates on a basis of one leader to a maximum of 25 participants.

**What the Insurance Scheme does not cover**
The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme does not cover volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators for the following non-exhaustive list:

- Personal accident and medical cover.
- Motor cover.
- Activities other than those connected with the Walking Group.
- Claims arising from walks held prior to registration with Get Ireland Walking.

The Insurer strongly recommends that the guidance provided by Get Ireland Walking (log onto [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie)) is followed to ensure the best possible protection for all involved.
www.getirelandwalking.ie) be followed when leading group walks.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What incidents should I report to the Insurer?
There is no simple rule about this; use of judgement and common sense is required. As a general guide, the Insurers don’t need to know about minor incidents that don’t result in injury. Nor do they need to know about incidents where the injury is minor or trivial.

They do need to know about incidents that might give rise to a claim.

Listed below are some examples where an incident should be reported:

- Emergency services called.
- Urgent medical help required.
- Outside help needed to get someone to safety.
- A death.
- Incidents involving significant loss or damage to property.

How do I report an incident?
The volunteer walk leader should complete an accident/incident report form. Copies of this form are available to download from www.getirelandwalking.ie

An accident/incident should also be reported to Get Ireland Walking by email to info@getirelandwalking.ie.

What cover do walkers in the group have?
The scheme does not provide member-to-member public liability cover or personal accident cover.

The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme provides for cover in the event of an accident due to proven negligence on the part of the volunteer walk leader and/or group coordinators.

Does the Insurance scheme stipulate a ratio of volunteer walk leaders to walkers?
Currently the insurance has stipulated a ratio of one leader to a maximum of 25 walkers. However, Get Ireland Walking strongly recommends that every group walk has at least two leaders per group (up to a maximum of 25).

Does the Insurance scheme stipulate a maximum distance for walks?
There is no stipulation on the maximum distance for walks. Get Ireland Walking recommends that groups provide walks that are accessible for people with low levels of physical activity. We also advise that walk leaders make sure that everyone knows the distance and terrain the walk will cover and the pace of the walk to enable people to make the decision as to whether they will be able to manage the walk.

Does the Insurance scheme cover organised walking events and festivals?
The policy does extend cover for a registered
walking group’s own walking event oriented towards growing local participation in walking.

A walking festival is **not** covered.

For the purposes of this insurance scheme, an event is a walking event that would be delivered for the benefit of the local community to encourage participation in walking whereas a festival is more a kin to a service for tourism. The difference is slight but important.

**Does the Insurance scheme cover a night walk?**

Yes, once the walk complies with the above.

Get Ireland Walking would strongly recommend that a risk assessment be conducted taking the conditions of night-time walking into account and, in particular, where and whether participants will walk on the road or on uneven ground.

**Does the Insurance scheme cover other physical activities e.g. jogging and running?**

No.

The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme only covers ‘walking’.

**Does the Insurance scheme stipulate an age limit for walkers?**

No. All walkers should be reminded to take responsibility for their own health and ensure that they are fit and well enough to participate. Get Ireland Walking recommends that people who have been diagnosed with a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis or have symptoms such as chest pain or blood pressure, dizziness or joint pain, talk to their doctor for advice on getting active and managing their condition.

Walk Leaders should make sure that everyone knows the distance and terrain the walk will cover to enable people to make the decision as to whether they will be able to manage the walk.

Get Ireland Walking suggests that children and young people be welcomed to join walking groups, but they must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

**Does the cover apply where a group is using the grounds of a local club?**

Cover is provided for walking on public paths, public roads, lowland walking trails, and looped walks below 300 metres. The Insurance scheme has not made any stipulations in relation to routes on privately owned land, which presumably includes the grounds of local sports clubs. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommends that walk leaders and/or co-ordinators discuss this with the relevant land owners/local clubs.

If a local club is setting up a walking group to walk within their own grounds, Get Ireland Walking recommend that they check their own insurance, as most organisations and clubs will have appropriate cover for activities held on their premises. The Get Ireland Walking Initiative Insurance Scheme will complement this as it will provide additional peace of mind for the volunteer walk leaders when leading a group walk on their own premises or on other routes.
Is Walk Leader Training a requirement of the Insurance scheme?
Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to training requirements for volunteer walk leaders and group co-ordinators. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommends that people taking on the role of volunteer walk leader and/or group coordinator do access training. Further details on training can be obtained from your Local Sports Partnership or from the Irish Heart Foundation. We also strongly recommend that you read our Factsheets on Starting a Walking Group and use the forms for group walks provided on the Get Ireland Walking website. Basic rules of the road should also be followed at all times.

Is First Aid Training a requirement of the Insurance scheme?
Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to training requirements for volunteer walk leaders and group coordinators. Contact your Local Sports Partnership to find out about first aid training in your area.

While walking is a very low risk physical activity, injuries can occur. Walkers should be reminded that a person’s own health is their own personal responsibility. Walk Leaders or other volunteers are not there to assess walkers’ health or to provide medical intervention should the need arise. All volunteers are expected to reasonably do is call the emergency services (999 or 112) should something go amiss. Any administration of first aid will be at the judgement of the individuals present and limited to their own knowledge, capacity and/or confidence.

Is it mandatory for volunteer walk leaders to carry a first aid kit?
No, currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to carrying a first aid kit.

Does the insurance policy have any stipulations in relation to footwear?
Currently the insurer has no stipulation in relation to footwear. Get Ireland Walking strongly recommends that all walkers wear sturdy, comfortable shoes or trainers. If a walker insists on attending a walk without proper footwear (or no footwear), please advise them that it is not recommended and they must take responsibility for their own participation.

Where can I access additional cover for my walking group?
For cover beyond the scope of this scheme, you should contact an insurance broker. Members of Mountaineering Ireland (www.mountaineering.ie) benefit from an extensive insurance policy (hillwalking, climbing, etc.), including €13 million of public liability cover, directors’ and officers’ cover, and limited personal accident cover.
Get Ireland Walking wants to help make your group walks an enjoyable experience for you, the other organisers, and the walkers. To help with the organisation of group walks, we have prepared a number of support forms. The forms aim to simplify the organisation of the walks and contribute to ensuring a safe and enjoyable walk for all involved.

Copies of these forms are available at the end of this Factsheet and can be printed out for use by your group.

The Walk Ready Questionnaire
You can provide better support to people wishing to join the walks if you know about any medical condition they have that could affect their ability to walk. This form provides an opportunity for you to check with people if it is safe for them to walk and it notifies them that they are responsible for their own health.

If anyone answers ‘yes’ to any of the questions, advise them to talk to their doctor about going walking.

Keep all this information confidential.

Remind people at the start of every walk to inform you if there has been a recent change in their medical state and, if so, ask them to complete a new form or update the existing one.

The Walk Register
In essence, this is a sign-in sheet for each walk. Getting people to complete this form helps everyone involved in a number of ways:

- It contributes to the safety of the walk. You know how many started and how many should finish.
- It acts as a reminder to people that they should take responsibility for themselves and that they are walking at their own risk.
- It also helps you to keep a record of attendance at walks; this can inform future plans e.g. what walks or times are popular, etc.
Accident/Incident Report Form
Should there be an accident/incident involving a walker/s, it is a good idea to take a couple of minutes at the end of the walk to take a note of what happened. You can use this form to jot down the details.

In the event of an accident/incident:

Stay calm
Ensure the safety of the injured person and of the other walkers.
Assess the situation and decide if medical assistance is needed. Call emergency services at 112 or 999.

After you have dealt with the accident/incident, remember to record details of what happened and have it signed by the person involved, yourself, and a witness. It is important to keep a record of the event, should there be a query on it at a later.

If the person is over 18, it is their choice whether they receive medical treatment. You can advise and give your opinion but the final decision is theirs.

Risk Assessment Form
Checking out the route first will help you plan and it will enable you to let people know about the route before heading out, approximately how long it is, if roads will be crossed, and any other information.

We recommend that you check out all new routes. It is also a good idea to check them as the seasons change, particularly if they are off-road routes.

Check the route for ‘hazards’, i.e. anything that could cause harm. Typically this could be:
Weather e.g. Rain making the surfaces slippery.
Animals such as dogs, horses, sheep, cattle.
Roads and vehicles.
Pavements and obstacles, uneven surfaces, tree roots.
Water, ponds and streams.

Then, consider the ‘risk’ that it could pose to the group and what you can do about it.

Giving the group information about the route can greatly help to ensure that the group stays safe.

Remember to keep all of these forms safe in your keeping.
Becoming more active is very safe for most people. Some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming more physically active. Start by answering all of the questions below. If you are over 65 years then check with your doctor anyway.

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a medical condition and should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?
   Yes  No

2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
   Yes  No

3. In the past month, have you had a pain in your chest while not doing physical activity?
   Yes  No

4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose concentration?
   Yes  No

5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by increasing your level of physical activity?
   Yes  No

6. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for your blood pressure or a heart condition?
   Yes  No

7. Do you know of any reason why you should not do physical activity?
   Yes  No

✓ I understand that by answering yes to one or more of the above questions then I should consult my doctor before taking part in this walking session.
✓ I agree to tell the walk leader if there are any changes in my health which affect my answers to the above questions.
✓ I understand that this information will be shared with other walk leaders.

Signed: __________________________  Date: ________________

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<tr>
<th>Emergency Contact Details (ICE number)</th>
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<td>Name: ___________________________     Tel no: __________________</td>
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Get Ireland Walking has adapted this form from the Irish Heart Foundation’s Community Walking Leader Training Manual and the Lets Walk Wales Leader Training Manual.
Walk Register

Date: _______________________
Time: _______________________
Route: ______________________________________________________
Duration (approx.): _____________________________________________
Walk Leaders: __________________________________ & ______________________

In partaking, I understand that:

- I take part at my own risk and that neither the organisers nor Walk Leaders will be liable for any injury that may occur to me.

- I should inform the Walk Leader of any health problems I have before the start of a walking session.

- I should wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

- I should partake at a pace that is appropriate for me.

- I should inform the Walk Leader if I am finding the walk too difficult for me.

- I should notify the Walk Leader if I wish to leave the walk before the finish.

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<tr>
<th>Walker Name</th>
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Get Ireland Walking has adapted this form from the Irish Heart Foundation’s Community Walking Leader Training Manual and the Lets Walk Wales Leader Training Manual.
Date: ____________________________________________

Leader details: ____________________________________________

Walk Leader’s name: ____________________________________________
Walk Leader’s name: ____________________________________________

Accident/Incident details:
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Name of person(s) involved: ____________________________________________

Date and time: ____________________________________________ Place: ____________________________________________

Details:
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Nature of injuries (if any): ____________________________________________

Details of actions taken by leader(s)/other walkers:
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Were any of the following contacted?  Gardaí  Ambulance  Relation

Outcome of accident/incident:
_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

The above is an accurate account of the incident

Leader’s signature:

Person(s) involved signature(s): ____________________________________________
Witness signature: ____________________________________________

Get Ireland Walking has adapted this form from the Irish Heart Foundation’s Community Walking Leader Training Manual
and the Lets Walk Wales Leader Training Manual
Route: ________________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________________________________________

Assessment carried out by: ____________________________________________

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<tr>
<th>Hazard?</th>
<th>Who might be harmed?</th>
<th>How is the risk controlled?</th>
<th>What further action is necessary to control the risk?</th>
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Get Ireland Walking has adapted this form from the Lets Walk Wales Leader Training Manual.
Being progressive
As a walking group organiser, you will always be keeping an eye out for people who are starting to lose enthusiasm. If people do decide to leave your group, it may be for positive or progressive reasons. They may want to start walking a longer distance or feel that they are able for a quicker pace. You can help accommodate these people by creating a second walk, perhaps one for strollers and one for pacers. A handy tip is to stagger the start times so that both groups finish up at approximately the same time. This will help contribute to the local community atmosphere and make people feel part of a larger walking group.

Mix it up
You can also look to change the walks you do on a weekly or monthly basis. Each looped walk can be walked in either direction to add some variety. As long as you can keep the distances similar and the start point the same, you can keep yourself and group members entertained and enthusiastic.

Turn up the pace
Another method of progressing with a walk is to increase the walking speed periodically throughout the walk. Once you feel able, you could decide that the third and fourth kilometre of a 5km walk could be performed at a quicker pace. This would allow the first 2km as a warm-up at normal pace and the last kilometre to return to the normal pace. This could be increased every couple of weeks.

Social recognition of milestones
Although walking is not intended to be competitive, it may be a good idea to remind people of how well they are progressing by letting them know how many walks they have completed. This could be done at the start of each walk whereby people who complete five, 10, 20 walks etc. are congratulated at the beginning. This may entice people to continue walking in order to improve their walk numbers and keep them interested.

Organise training and share information
The group, through networking with Get Ireland Walking and our partner organisations, could access and share information on walking, physical activity, and healthy living. Training courses could be organised for the group through the Local Sports Partnership or the Irish Heart Foundation. The group could also invite speakers on related topics such as historians, environmentalists, healthy eating, etc., to meet the group.
Healthy challenges
You can easily keep track of how many kilometres your group completes each week. If you walk 5km and have 20 members, then your group has covered 100km in that week. You could find out what a similar group of your size completes and look to keep each other motivated for a more sustainable walking group. Check out our 21 Day Walking Challenge and contact our partner organisations about other walking and physical activity challenges.

Cut out the excuses
If you find that your time out walking doesn’t allow for enough time to be spent with loved ones, why not encourage them to come on the walks with you? That way, you’ll have plenty of time to talk and you will both be in a social setting within the community.

By having a specific walking time that’s strictly kept, your friends and family will understand that, for example, between 7pm-8pm every Tuesday night, you’re not available and it’s important that they respect that. If you were involved in team sports and had specific training times, you would be less likely to make an excuse for missing a session. Your walking group should be no different.

Walking events and trips
To further extend the reach of your group, you could look at the possibility of hosting a walking event in your local area. This could be a fantastic way to generate support from the local community and to get local businesses on board. You can advertise the event on www.getirelandactive.ie. An annual walking trip (it could be a day or weekend) for the group can be a great group-building experience for everyone involved.

Continue to accommodate and actively encourage new people to join the group
Plan walks for a season or set period (eight, 10 or 12 weeks), commence the walking series with a kick-off event and finish with a social event at which the achievements of the group are acknowledged. The beginning of each series provides an opportunity for new people to join the group.
Get Ireland Walking is a national initiative that aims to maximise the number of people participating in walking – for health, wellbeing and fitness throughout Ireland.

Get Ireland Walking aims:
- To unify and enable the efforts of all recreation, sporting and health promotion agencies and associations interested in promoting walking
- To increase awareness and encourage widespread participation in walking
- To identify and support all existing walking groups
- To support the development of new walking groups
- To encourage and inspire those that wish to be independent walkers to do so
- Overall, to promote the benefits of walking.

What we do

We provide tips and advice for people wishing to become more active through walking. We also support the setting up and development of local walking groups, through the provision of the following resources, all of which are FREE of charge:
- A community programme to support your community to become more active through walking - Active Community Walking Programme
- Insurance cover for volunteer walking group leaders and co-ordinators
- Factsheets on setting up and developing local walking groups
- A central source of information on all walking initiatives and supports available in the country
- A database of walking groups and initiatives
- A space for walkers to share experiences and ideas
- A national voice for walking in Ireland.

Get Ireland Walking is calling on individuals and communities to get walking, set up walking groups and provide people with opportunities to Walk for Health, Walk for Fun and Walk for Life.

Who we are

Get Ireland Walking is an initiative of the Irish Sports Council, funded by Healthy Ireland and supported by Mountaineering Ireland, the Irish Heart Foundation, HSE Health Promotion and Improvement, Age and Opportunity, Gaelic Athletic Association, Ireland Active, Arthritis Ireland, and others.
### Useful Contacts & Links

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<tr>
<th>Get Ireland Walking</th>
<th>Tel: 01 625 1109</th>
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<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie">info@getirelandwalking.ie</a></td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.getirelandwalking.ie">www.getirelandwalking.ie</a></td>
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<td><strong>Walking Routes</strong></td>
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<td>National Trails Office / Irish Sports Council</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 8608800</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:nto@irishsportscouncil.ie">nto@irishsportscouncil.ie</a></td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.irishtrails.ie">www.irishtrails.ie</a></td>
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<td>Irish Heart Foundation / Slí na Sláinte</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 6685001</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@irishheart.ie">info@irishheart.ie</a></td>
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<td>Get Ireland Active</td>
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<td><strong>Group/Club Support</strong></td>
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<td>Mountaineering Ireland</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 6251115</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@mountaineering.ie">info@mountaineering.ie</a></td>
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<td><strong>Emergency Services</strong></td>
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<td>Tel: 999 or 112</td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.mountaineering.ie">www.mountaineering.ie</a></td>
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<td>Arthritis Ireland</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 6618188</td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.arthritisireland.ie">www.arthritisireland.ie</a></td>
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<td>Age and Opportunity / Go for Life</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 8057709</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@ageandopportunity.ie">info@ageandopportunity.ie</a></td>
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<td><strong>Support Resources</strong></td>
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<td>Get Ireland Active</td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.getirelandactive.ie">www.getirelandactive.ie</a></td>
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<td>Health Service Executive</td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.healthpromotion.ie">www.healthpromotion.ie</a></td>
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<td>Irish Heart Foundation / Slí na Sláinte</td>
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<td>Tel: 01 6685001</td>
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<td>Email: <a href="mailto:info@irishheart.ie">info@irishheart.ie</a></td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.irishheart.ie/sli">www.irishheart.ie/sli</a></td>
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<td>Leave No Trace Ireland</td>
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<td>Web: <a href="http://www.leavenotraceireland.org">www.leavenotraceireland.org</a></td>
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01 625 1109

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087 299 4687

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info@getirelandwalking.ie