



4-WEEK PREP PLAN

This whole-self guide will ensure you get to 5K feeling your best—every step of the way.

 **Prevention**
virtual
walk 5k
OCT 2ND 2021 

Committing to Yourself

WEEK
1
SEPTEMBER 5-11

HOORAY! CONGRATS!

You've signed up to participate in *Prevention's* Virtual 5K. You're now part of a community of people from all over the country who are taking action to improve their health. "You're doing something to help inspire other people and also make you feel good about yourself," says Judy Ho, Ph.D., clinical neuropsychologist and author of *Stop Self-Sabotage: Six Steps to Unlock Your True Motivation, Harness Your Willpower, and Get Out of Your Own Way*.

Research shows that walking (and exercise in general) can improve heart health, support brainpower, keep joints healthy, enhance mental well-being, and even help you live longer. Here's how to make the most of the important step you're taking by doing this 5K.

■ MAKE IT PUBLIC

Post about the virtual 5K on social media and tell friends and family what you're working toward. "You're making a promise, not just to yourself but to other people in the community, when you announce that you're part of this big project or undertaking," says Ho. Plus, when others are aware of what you're aiming for, they can cheer you on.

■ CREATE MINI GOALS

Break down your 5K into smaller targets to hit along the way. For instance, maybe you want to walk a mile without stopping by the end of your first week and then two miles by the end of the third week. Or maybe your first mini goal is doing a 15-minute lunchtime walk three days in a row and

your second one is five 20-minute midday strolls in a row. "Setting up these intermediary goals you can check off in a day or a week can really keep you on track toward a big goal," says Ho.

■ THINK ABOUT WHY YOU SIGNED UP

Any time you commit to a goal, it's smart to ask yourself, *How does this align with my values?* "Values are not like goals. They're not things you check off a list," says Ho. "They're things you want to stand for and how you want to be remembered by other people. Values are extremely important for us to feel intrinsic motivation. Knowing that higher purpose helps you stay motivated and keeps you on track with the goal."



YOUR GOALS THIS WEEK

- * Write down why this walk matters to you.
- * Add ingredients to your plate instead of taking them away.
- * Walk at least two times.



WHERE FOOD FITS IN

"The way we eat is a form of self-care," says Marisa Moore, R.D.N., a nutritionist based in Atlanta. Her lesson for you this week: Deprivation doesn't have a role in your Virtual Walk prep. "My philosophy is to figure out what you can *add* to your plate," she says.

That makes sense, especially for Virtual Walkers: "It's really important that you properly fuel yourself," Moore says. Are you getting protein, carbs, and fat at every meal? "Sometimes people assume their endurance is down, but it could be that they're just not properly fueled," she says Moore. "If you find that you're getting enough sleep and you're still tired, it could be that you don't have enough carbs in your system to help you go that extra half mile." Meanwhile, protein keeps you full, and healthy fats give you energy and help you absorb nutrients. If you're not getting all three at every meal, make it a goal to add what you're missing more often—and don't beat yourself up when you don't. Making a commitment to yourself includes being kind to yourself, especially when it comes to food.

AND OF COURSE... WALK!

The way you show commitment to yourself, from a fitness point of view, is through consistency. You don't have to worry about how hard or fast to go right now: Just get your body walking. "First, you want to build your base," explains Betsy Magato, a coach with Charge Running, the app you can use to join training walks and the live Virtual Walk event on October 2. "Establish a really good foundation of easy walking so you can strengthen your aerobic system and your connective tissue." Make a plan to walk a comfortable number of times this week: If you're already a walker, stick with what you're doing or add one additional walk. If you're starting fresh, commit to walking two times this week, with a plan to add one walk per week until the big day. (Always talk to your doctor before starting a new fitness program, though!)

▶ JOIN A LIVE WALK TOO

Here's how to take part with Charge Running, which offers two 20-minute live walking classes every day. You'll be in a virtual class with a motivating coach and other walkers whom you can message and cheer on right in the app.

- 1 Download the Charge Running app from the App Store or the Google Play Store.
- 2 Create an account using your email address or through Facebook.
- 3 Join in as many of the *free* Charge Move walking classes as you would like. You can also access all other classes on the Charge platform with a no-obligation seven-day free trial. Please email support@charge-running.com with any questions.



Taking Care of Your Body

WEEK

2

SEPTEMBER 12-18

What we eat affects our energy levels, sleep, and how we feel, which is why eating is a critical way in which we nourish our whole self. Taking care of your body is not about getting a certain number of calories or shopping for specific ingredients, but about enjoying your food. That's the path to wellness. Sound like a big ask for a meal? It's actually pretty simple with these tips from Moore:

■ MAKE MEALS YOU LOVE EVEN HEALTHIER

You don't have to try all new recipes when you're making a commitment to your health. If a meal you grew up with is low in nutritional value, give it an extra kick by adding new ingredients to it. You can sub black beans for some or all of the meat in tacos, for instance, or add zucchini, squash, tomatoes, or hearty leafy greens like kale to soup or to any meal as a side.

■ PREP INGREDIENTS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER

"When I say 'prep,' I'm not talking about having five meals ready to go every week," Moore says. "It's breaking down your cauliflower on Sunday so when

Wednesday rolls around, all you have to do is pop it in the oven." You can also chop some veggies ahead of time so you can make a quick omelet for lunch or dinner, and wash your fruit so it's ready to be a snack anytime.

■ USE PANTRY STAPLES TO MAKE MORE TIME FOR FAMILY

"There's a lot of all or nothing thinking when it comes to nutrition, and that gets us nowhere," Moore says. Eating with others is a classic way to slow down and enjoy our food, but that's awfully tricky when we think we have to make a major meal in order to have a proper family dinner. Instead, serve up a simple meal, like Moore's quick one-pan black bean and rice skillet at right.



EASY BLACK BEAN AND RICE SKILLET

Sauté a diced **red onion** in 1 Tbsp **avocado oil** along with ½ tsp each **smoked paprika** and **dried oregano** to taste. Stir in 1½ cups cooked **black beans** or 1 can **black beans** (drained and rinsed), 2 cups cooked **brown rice**, one 10-oz can **diced tomatoes with green chiles**, and ½ cup shredded **Monterey jack or Cheddar cheese**. Then give it all a quick broil in the oven for a cheesy, bubbly finish. Once the skillet is out of the oven, I like to add lots of colorful and flavorful toppings like **cilantro**, sliced **jalapeños**, wedges of **lime**, and **avocado**.

YOUR GOALS THIS WEEK

- * Sit down to eat with someone at least once.
- * Do a breathing exercise.
- * Add faster-paced intervals to one walk.

THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

The training you're doing for the Virtual Walk can take many forms. As you build up your walks, it's important to consider your mental health at the same time. Here are two ways to do that from Ho.

► Go for a mindful walk.

It's easy to let walks turn into times for multitasking—chances to review your to-do list or catch up with someone on the phone—and that can be helpful sometimes. But if you really want to strengthen your mind-body connection, you need to take off your headphones and focus your attention on the present moment. Ho suggests "narrating" your environment: For five or 10 minutes of your walk, notice everything around you by tuning in to your senses—whether by noticing the apple tree in your neighbor's yard, the architecture of a new building being constructed, the smell of fresh cut grass, the sound of birds chirping, the way your feet feel as they hit the pavement, or shapes in the clouds—and narrate these observations in your mind. *Oh, that house has two flowerpots on the front porch. Look at that beautiful bird.* Tune in to what's around you.



► Do a breathing exercise.

One of Ho's favorite breathing exercises is called box breathing—and it's so easy, you can do it while you're waiting for food to warm in the toaster oven or even while you're on a walk. Imagine that there is a box in front of your face and use your finger to trace its border: Breathe in as your finger goes up one side, hold your breath as it goes across the top, exhale as your finger moves down the other side, and hold your breath again as it continues across the bottom to close the rectangle. "Repeat that five to 10 times," suggests Ho. "It's so visceral, and tracing the box really helps you slow your breathing and focus on being present with your breath."

ADD SPICE TO YOUR WALK

"We mortals train exactly like the Olympians do," says Magato, "which is really cool, because our bodies are amazing." Once you feel that you have a solid base and can walk comfortably a couple of days a week for 30 minutes or so, the way to up your speed and build your endurance is by adding intervals to one to two workouts per week. Here's how.



PICK UP YOUR PACE FOR 30 SECONDS

Your legs should be moving faster, and you should feel yourself adding power to propel yourself more quickly. Magato prefers timed intervals to distance-based ones: "You might be going up a hill or walking on a really hot day," she points out, so using time makes for a better challenge.



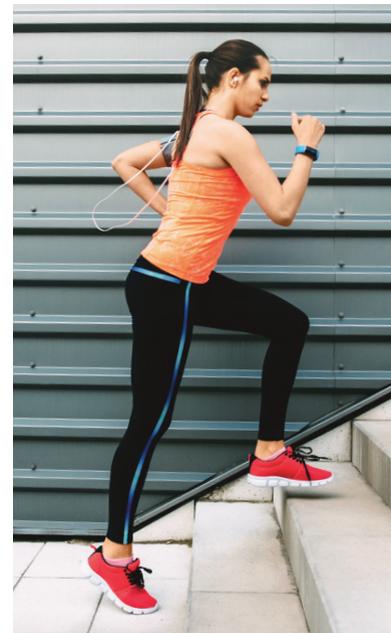
REPEAT UP TO 10 TIMES IN A SINGLE WALK

Take a break after your interval for 30 seconds to a minute or so. Try to fit 10 pick-ups into a 15- to 20-minute walk. If you can't, that's OK: Now you have something to work toward.



DON'T REST ON YOUR LAURELS

Once you can do ten 30-second intervals in a single walk, change what you do. Repeating the same interval workout over and over won't challenge your lungs and legs. Instead, add 15 seconds to your intervals or shorten the time between them. Switch it up!



Staying Motivated

WEEK
3
SEPTEMBER 19-25

When the thrill of signing up for a big event has worn off but the big day just isn't coming fast enough, you might struggle to stick with a training routine. We get it. After all, "Everybody's busy!" says Julie Wallock, cofounder of Charge Running. So know that you're not alone if you're tempted to skip a walk or you wonder, *Does this one really matter?* And sure, you're not going to ruin all your hard work by doing an errand instead of taking 30 minutes for a walk. But the truth is that every time you move your body, it matters. The key to making it happen is to reframe your thinking, Wallock says. It's about not *How do I fit this in?* but *I get to do this*. Here's how to get in that mindset:

■ MAKE IT FUN

"You don't want to think of walking as a chore," says Wallock. "Whatever you can do to associate it with fun is the best way to make it a habit." She walks with her husband or pushes her son in a stroller. Magato makes a point of looking for heart-shaped cracks in the sidewalk. "When you have that joyful feeling, you want to go back and do it again," she says. "It's a really positive loop you get yourself in."

■ FIND A COMMUNITY— AND BE A TRUE PART OF IT

"There's something special about people going through the same thing you are," Wallock

says. Call a friend, join the *Prevention Virtual Walkers* Facebook group, or get a team going for the Virtual Walk. If you haven't tried a Charge Running walking class, give it a go: You can just listen in and see what it's all about, but the real power comes from participating, Wallock says. "Talk in the chat; let the others know where you are in your journey and what you're working toward," she says. "Everyone is really welcoming." If you're a beginner, you'll find major support—but don't forget, "inspiration flows both ways," Magato says. You might be the person who sends someone a supportive emoji or shares what you've learned.

“
We find the time for things that are important to us.”

—Charge Running cofounder JULIE WALLOCK



YOUR GOALS THIS WEEK

- * Join a community of walkers.
- * Write two to three "If, then..." statements (see opposite page).
- * Try a new recipe.

RETHINKING WILLPOWER

"People have antiquated ideas about willpower—that some people are just born with more of it," says Ho, who touches on this subject in *Stop Self-Sabotage*. "Willpower is a skill. It's a muscle that you can grow and train and make stronger over time."

One way to do that is to think ahead about both positives and negatives. "You should have regular visualizations of how it's going to feel when you reach your goals," says Ho, "but if you focus just on the positive outcome, you'll be disappointed when you run into an obstacle and may not have an action plan ready to tackle it." Spend a few minutes thinking about obstacles you may face as you train and a specific action you can take to overcome each one. Some examples: *If I wake up late, then I will go for a 10-minute walk instead of a 30-minute one. If I know I'm going to be tired at the end of the day, I will schedule a 15-minute walk at lunchtime.* Write down your "If, then..." statements in a journal or on a piece of paper you post in your bathroom or office—a place where you'll regularly see it. "Then everything's already prescribed for you ahead of time," says Ho, and you won't have to waste time or energy trying to figure out what to do in the moment when you encounter an obstacle.



EATING WELL FOR LIFE

The trick is not to worry about being perfect! "Who wants to be the person who says they eat perfectly? I'm not that person!" says Moore. "People frequently strive for that, and they find it's really challenging. It's also not necessary. When it comes to habit formation, you form the path that's good for you by simply taking small steps."

► Rather than aim for perfection, try to keep food interesting!

If some monotony has set in this week, you can frame food as an opportunity to try something new and fun. "Engaging creatively with what you eat can make you excited and can help you stay motivated," says Moore. Here, tips from her to switch things up:

- Spruce up your water with lime or mint.
- Change your snacks—if last week was fruit, try something savory. Or make snacks salty and sweet, such as an apple with nut butter or dried berries with sunflower seeds.
- Find out what others are making. The *Virtual Walk Facebook group* is a great way to exchange recipes! "Talking to someone else can keep you on a path to eating more vegetables or trying new things," Moore says.

Walking Proudly

YOUR FINAL PREP

■ PLAN YOUR WALK!

Where will you go, and what time will you head out? Will you walk with others, or is this a solo adventure? The Virtual Walk is a special experience if you make it so: Fill out your "I Did It" sign with something meaningful to you—where you walked, who you were with, or how you felt. Take a picture too—and know that your fellow walkers would love to "like" it in our Facebook group, Prevention Virtual Walkers. And of course, if you can, join the Prevention community at 11 a.m. ET on the Charge Running app. There'll be music, encouragement, and so much fun.

■ CRAFT THE PERFECT PLAYLIST

If you can't join the live walk, put together your own music for the big day. Ho likes to make a "value playlist": "I like to pick songs that I think represent my top values, and then I put them into a playlist," she explains. "It keeps you engaged and reminds you why you're doing these things and committing to these goals."

■ FUEL YOURSELF

By now, Moore says, you likely know how much food you need to cover the 5K. So make yourself your favorite "I've got this" breakfast—perhaps yogurt with berries or peanut butter on toast. Almost as vital is to make a plan for what to eat *after* your walk: "It's important to get carbohydrates and protein to support muscle synthesis. It can be any combination of these two, so your body can be ready to take another day."

WEEK
4
SEPTEMBER 26-
OCTOBER 2



CELEBRATE!

► Plan your personal party

How are you going to reward yourself for completing the 5K? "Thinking about it in specific detail is very helpful for people to maintain their motivation," says Ho. Really savor the details of the party, including who will be there, what you will be doing, and how you will feel. Also, create little stepping-stone rewards for yourself by putting ideas on a "joy list." Take five minutes to jot down everything, big and small, that brings you happiness. Maybe the list includes a new pair of sneakers, a night out with friends, or a day at an amusement park. "What are the things that most motivate you?" asks Ho. "Reward yourself from your joy list when you reach daily goals and bigger milestones."

► Make a going-forward plan for food

"You hold the keys to what you need to do," Moore says. Build on what you have accomplished: "If you started out saying you wanted to add more vegetables, the next step could simply be adding another half cup to tonight's dinner." And remember, "It is a journey, not a destination." Enjoy the process of finding the right foods for you.

► Keep on walking

"You should be so proud of what you've accomplished," says Wallock, "so keep up your momentum." Walking isn't just an event—it's a way of life. "There doesn't have to be a bigger goal," says Wallock. "You did 5K, but that doesn't mean you have to do a 10K!" Just keep your forward motion—stick with consistent walks, add more intervals, or find another race. "You just don't want to say you got all the way here and now you're going to go backward," she says. Not sure what's next for you? Stay tuned for the spring 2022 *Prevention* Virtual Walk!



READY FOR FUN?

Join our first-ever *live* Virtual Walk by downloading the Charge Running app and scrolling through the events to find ours. At 11 a.m. ET on October 2, tap on our event and you'll be right there with us!



**CHARGE
RUNNING**



* WALK AND WIN!

Tell us why you walk, and you can be entered for a chance to win one of ten \$100 Brooks gift cards. We love to hear your stories! Find out more at prevention.com/walk-contest.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. *Prevention*/Brooks Virtual Walk Contest. Sponsored by Hearst Magazine Media, Inc. Beginning July 13, 2021, at 12:01 a.m. (ET) through October 2, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. (ET) (the "Entry Period"), go to prevention.com/walk-contest on a computer or wireless device and fill out the entry form and submit an essay of 250 words or less describing why you walk. Ten (10) winners will get a Brooks gift card (ARV: \$100). Total ARV: \$1,000. Important Notice: You may be charged for visiting the mobile website in accordance with the terms of your service agreement with your carrier. Must have reached the age of majority and be a legal resident of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia or Canada (excluding Quebec). Void in Puerto Rico and where prohibited by law. Contest is subject to complete official rules available at prevention.com/walk-contest.

Your Virtual Walk Checklist

There are so many fun ways to enjoy the 2021 Virtual Walk. Items in black are must-do's—for the rest, it's totally up to you!

Sign up! Congrats, you've done this! Tell your friends to visit runsignup.com/prevention-virtual-walk so they can too.

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Order a T-shirt and a bib number. You still can, even if you've already registered; just log in to your account on RunSignUp.

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Set up or join a team. You can do this in RunSignUp too.

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Join and post in our Facebook group, *Prevention Virtual Walkers*. We love to see pics of where you walk!

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Enter the "Why I Walk" contest. You could have the chance to win a \$100 Brooks gift card!

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Take part in a Charge Running live walking class. Listen to music, get support from a coach, and meet other walkers.

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Sign in to Charge Running on October 2 at 11 a.m. ET. We can now do the Virtual Walk together!

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HAVE FUN!
