Finally, it’s that time of year when we begin thinking about taking advantage of better weather and participating in outdoor activities. Walking and running are two of the best ways to get the heart pumping and the calories burning.

If you’ve been hibernating all winter, commit to walking three to four days per week. Track your progress and then reward yourself once you’ve accomplished your goal. If you’ve stayed active over the winter months, incorporating a daily jog into your schedule may be the way to go. Set a goal to beat your personal best time in an upcoming 5K (3.1-mile) race or even train to complete a half or full marathon.

Ways to be a walking warrior

- If you want to jump start the pace of your walk, take short, quick strides to increase your intensity.
- Bend your arms at 90 degrees, and swing them naturally front to back as you walk. You can add power and speed by using your arms effectively.
- Walk with shoulders back, but relaxed. Good posture for walking allows you to breathe well. Your chin should be parallel to the ground, and your eyes should focus on the street or track 10 to 20 feet ahead. Your back should have a natural curve. If you feel strain in your lower back, you’re probably leaning forward, or not at a relaxed position.

How to make your run fun

- Make it a habit. If you’re just beginning, focus on the frequency, and not distance or speed. You’re better running a ½ mile four days per week, rather than trying to run three miles twice per week.
- Be a social runner. Running with a friend, joining a running club, or even just signing up for various 5K races in the community will add accountability and fun to your runs.
- Choose a distance that is comfortable for you to run two times per week. Then, add a third long run each week to challenge yourself. Try to slightly increase the distance of your long run each week, even if it’s only by a tenth of a mile.
- If you tend to hit the proverbial wall during your runs, try to synchronize your breathing with your steps. For instance, take a breath in over four strides, then breathe out on the next four. You could also count your steps up to 50 or 100 to take your mind off things, and get past that wall to finish strong!

No matter the goal you set, make sure you get outside and enjoy this great time of the year by walking or running your way to a healthier you!