

## CHAPTER THIRTY SEVEN

### Walking <sup>1</sup>

*And bless our master Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) as many times as all the fish, all the sea-creatures, all the water and all grains of sand and whatever else there is.*

When one walks then the blood circulates around the body effectively and oxygen reaches all cells of the body. One's strength is increased and the mind freshens. Those who sit around all day then their hormones within the body do not develop. Because these hormones are not developed it is difficult for the body to fight illnesses in the body. For the blood to reach all parts of the body movement is necessary. By walking all the parts of the body are in motion hence the blood circulates efficiently.

An advantage in walking is that the body's Cholesterol stays under control. By walking the movement of the body brings out sweat. Sweating is good as it rids unwanted substances from the body. If sweating is not achieved then illnesses can develop.<sup>i</sup>

The following statistics were published in a local newspaper, The Citizen, April 2004.

- Regular walking cuts the risk of heart disease by up to 50%.<sup>ii</sup>
- Fit walkers are less likely to fall and suffer injuries like hip fractures because their bones are strengthened by walking, are less prone to depression and anxiety, tend to be good sleepers and are better able to control body weight.
- More walking could slash £7billion off the UK's health bill.

Investigators at Harvard carried out a prospective study of walking compared with vigorous exercise in the prevention of coronary heart disease in 72,000 female nurses aged 40 to 65 years.<sup>iii</sup> Over an eight-year study period they found that sedentary women had substantially higher rates of coronary events (death and non-fatal heart attacks) than women who were active. The authors assessed the comparative roles of walking and vigorous exercise in the prevention of coronary events and found that the magnitude of risk reduction with vigorous exercise was no greater than that found in women who walked briskly three or more hours a week. Walking this amount each week reduced the risk of coronary events by 30 to 40 percent. Using statistically sophisticated multivariate relative-risk analyses, authors of this study estimate that more than one-third of coronary events among middle-aged women in the U.S. are attributable to physical inactivity.<sup>iv</sup>

Children, adolescents, and men and women of all ages benefit from walking. A meta-analysis of childhood obesity published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* (in 2002) found that the exercise program which was most effective in reducing body weight and percent body fat in this age group (age 5–17) was long walks, combined with repetition resistance exercise.<sup>v</sup>

A report by the U.S. Surgeon General on Physical Activity and Health<sup>vi</sup> notes that a growing body of scientific evidence indicates that physical inactivity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular<sup>2</sup> disease (the most common cause of death in both men and women) and some cancers (colon cancer, in particular, and, according to some studies, breast and prostate cancer). The report goes on to say that most Americans have little or no physical activity in their daily lives. It reviews prior public health recommendations and points out that they have evolved from emphasizing vigorous activity for cardiorespiratory fitness to now include "the option of moderate levels of activity for numerous health benefits." The report advises people of all ages "to include a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity of moderate intensity (such as brisk walking) on most, if not all, days of the week." For people who can't find the time to do this and remain physically inactive, wearing weighted shoes is an alternative. In physically inactive people, wearing weighted shoes throughout the day while performing the activities of daily living (walking about the house, at work, doing household chores, preparing meals, shopping, walking back and forth to one's car in parking lots, etc.) can provide needed, and otherwise not obtained, aerobic exercise and leg muscle strengthening. People who follow the Surgeon General's recommendations on physical activity and take brisk walks three to four hours a week will achieve added benefits when they wear weighted shoes on their walks.

<sup>1</sup> See Volume One, Chapter Forty-Eight for this Sunnah

<sup>2</sup> This effects the circulation of blood around the body which brings about transport of nutrients and oxygen to the tissues and the removal of waste products.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) liked to walk about in the gardens to which he sometimes retreated for relaxation. He would go to the green gardens for walks too.

'Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) narrates that once, when she went on a journey with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace), she challenged him to a race, and won. Later, when she had gained weight, she raced him again, but this time he won, and told her, "*This is for that.*"<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Health in new generation

<sup>ii</sup> Department of Health

<sup>iii</sup> Published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1999

<sup>iv</sup> Manson JE, Hu FB, Rich-Edwards JW, Colditz GA, Stampfer MJ, Willett WC, Speizer FE, Hennekens CH. A prospective study of walking as compared with vigorous exercise in the prevention of coronary heart disease in women. *N Engl J Med* 1999; 341: 650-658

<sup>v</sup> LeMura, LM and Maziekas, MT. Factors that alter body fat, body mass, and fat-free mass in pediatric obesity. *Med Sci Sports Exerc* 2002; 34: 487-496.

<sup>vi</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, Ga: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 1996. Stock number 017-023-00196-5.

<sup>vii</sup> Ahmad & Abu Dawud