

The **Walk Across Minnesota** Challenge

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Background

During a spring MDH Community and Family Health (CFH) Division meeting, staff wrote down suggestions for ways to easily incorporate and encourage more physical activity into our workdays. Several people mentioned participating in a coordinated fitness or wellness challenge. Maggie Diebel, CFH Division Director, knew that the MDH WIC program had coordinated a successful fitness and wellness challenge called "Walk Across Minnesota" with local offices throughout the state. WIC allowed us to adapt the materials they had created making it very feasible to coordinate the challenge in a short amount of time. **You are welcome to adapt this walking campaign to your agency. Please replace the information in red with your agency information.**

What is the Walk Across Minnesota?

The basic premise of the Walk Across Minnesota challenge is that each person keeps track of their physical activity, above and beyond normal activity at home and at work. So strolling around the grocery store does not count, but walking your dog does, or taking your kids to the park and playing with them, taking a walk at lunch time, taking the stairs. Every 15 minutes of activity equals one mile.

Each week for five weeks you add up your minutes or "miles" and send those to your team captain (for teams of six people or less) who in turn reports the team's total. There are also bonus points and many are not based on physical activity such as drinking more water, eating whole grains, switching to skim milk. Bonus points are added to your mileage and can boost your team's score.

So how does this get you walking around MN? Your team captain will know how many miles your team has walked each week and can plot your course on the pre-identified trip route, which is 651 miles all the way around. Teams will be given a state map to post up so they can track their progress each week.

The goal is to have all teams make it around the state at least once. Teams that pass that mark before the end of the five weeks can start the route over again.



Rules for the **Walk Across Minnesota** Challenge

Join your colleagues on a five-week “virtual tour” around Minnesota and visit places of interest along the way. During the challenge, each team will keep track of the number of minutes that team members are active each day. This includes walking, running, bicycling, aerobic dance, strength training and many other activities. The minutes of activity for the team convert to “miles”. As the team miles accumulate, the team progresses on the virtual tour.

The tour is a total of 651 miles. We start in St. Paul on the state Capitol steps. From there, we travel north to Duluth via I-35, head west across the north central part of the state through Walker and Alexandria, turn south to travel down through the central part of the state to New Ulm, and then head back to the state Capitol steps via US 169.

Rules:

1. Form a team.
 - Each team will be comprised of 6 members. (A team may choose to have less than 6 members.)
 - Name your team.
2. Select a team captain.
3. All teams begin from the same starting point and travel around the state on the same course. While there are five legs to the trip and it is a five week activity, it is not expected that each team will be on a new leg each of the five weeks of the challenge. Instead, the team will progress to the new leg of the trip as they accumulate the miles.
4. Each team member keeps a log of his or her own physical activity minutes and will report the minutes to the team captain on a weekly basis. See the **Weekly Log** for more information.
 - Submit the minutes to the team captain every Monday morning.
 - Team members should estimate the number of minutes they are active each day. Include only minutes above and beyond usual activity at work or home.
 - What activity counts? The physical activity should be moderate or vigorous and intense enough to increase your heart rate. **Do not include minutes spent walking at a casual pace**, such as while grocery shopping, and doing light household chores.
 - Examples of activities that do count: walking, biking, running, rollerblading, strength training, aerobics or other exercise class, yard work, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and cross-country skiing.

- The tour will last for five weeks and is described on the **Trip Route**. There are opportunities to earn bonus points during each week. Members can participate in specific physical activities or adopt “wellness” behaviors to earn bonus points. The bonus point opportunities are specific to each week, though, and do not extend through the whole challenge. **Each bonus point will equal one mile and be added to the total mileage for the team.**
5. The team captain maintains a record of total minutes of physical activity and bonus points for the whole team. See the **Weekly Log for Captains** for more information.
 - **Fifteen minutes of physical activity equals one mile.** Include the bonus points as miles in the total.
 - The team captain will convert the minutes to miles and report the team miles to (agency coordinator) weekly. Contact information for (agency coordinator):
Phone: _____
Email: _____
 6. If you complete the trip across Minnesota (651 miles) and return to the state Capitol before July 26th, keep going! Start back at leg 1 and keep adding to your total mileage.
 7. The challenge will begin on Monday _____ (start tracking your and will run for five weeks. It concludes on Sunday _____, with final submission of minutes/miles on Monday _____. The three teams with the most accumulated miles at the end of the five weeks are the winners. Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams.
 8. Questions about the challenge and rules should be directed to _____. Contact information for _____:
Phone: _____
Email: _____

If you are not currently participating in an exercise program, check with your physician before starting. For more information on how to start a walking program go to <http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/walking.htm>



FAQ for the **Walk Across Minnesota** Challenge

What do I need to do to participate?

Join a team! Get together with six (or fewer) of your colleagues and choose a team name and a captain.

How do I find out what counts as activity?

Check out the [Rules for the Challenge](#) for this information and more. The [Trip Route](#) describes the path around the state that you and your team are “walking.”

All documents and information will be posted on the _____ intranet, <http://>_____. Look under “_____.” You can print everything from that page.

How do I submit my minutes of activity each week?

Each Monday morning (start tracking your minutes on _____) you will submit a weekly total of your miles – this is easily calculated by filling in your minutes of activity and any bonus points earned on the [Weekly Log for Team Members](#). On Monday morning, hand in or email this amount to your team captain. Team captains total the miles for everyone on the team and submit that number to _____.

What can I do to earn bonus points?

Each week there will be a new opportunity to earn bonus points. Many of the bonus points are based on trying something that is not physical activity-based such as eating whole grains, drinking more water, etc. Your team captain will receive an email each week letting him or her know what the bonus points will be for that week. In turn, your team captain will communicate this info to your team. They will also be posted on the _____ intranet.



Walk Across Minnesota

Team Captain's Responsibilities

1. Distribute copies of the following Challenge materials to the members of the team:
 - Rules for the Challenge
 - Walk Across Minnesota Route
 - Team Member Weekly log sheets. Each team member will need 5 copies of the log sheet.
 - Each week distribute the bonus point options for that week. Team Captains will receive an email from _____ with this information every Monday.
2. The challenge will begin on _____ and will run for five weeks. It concludes on _____, with the final day of reporting minutes/miles on Monday, _____.
3. Team members should report their weekly minutes and bonus points to the team captain each Monday morning. (The tracking weeks run from Monday through Sunday.) Keep track of team minutes and bonus points on the Team Captain Weekly Log form. As the team captain, you will need to convert minutes to miles. **Fifteen minutes of physical activity equals one mile.**
4. Each Monday, beginning _____ and ending _____, report the team miles for the week. **Report the mileage to _____, _____ @state.mn.us.**
 - Your name and team name
 - Your team's total number of miles for the previous week (each week starts on a Monday and ends on the following Sunday)You can report the mileage sometime later in the week if you do not have your team total by Monday.
5. As your team accumulates miles, you will progress to new "legs" of the trip. You will need to estimate when your team enters a new leg of the trip. Keep team members informed of which leg the team is on.
6. Let members know that good health and fitness is the goal of this challenge and not every team will complete the tour in just 5 weeks. To accumulate 651 miles, every team member should be active for at least 30 minutes every day and also accrue some bonus points. If your team has fewer than 6 members, the daily activity requirement for each member would be increased.
7. If you complete the trip across Minnesota (651 miles) and return to the state Capitol before July 26th, keep going! Start back at leg 1 and keep adding to your total mileage.

8. Keep your teammates informed of the team's progress across the state. Display a map of Minnesota. You may keep track of your team's progress on the map with a highlighter or colored tacks. The Trip Route includes mile markers for each city. Consider hanging the map in an area where it is visible to your team. If you need a Minnesota map, contact _____.
9. The three teams with the most miles at the end of the challenge are the winners! Winners will be notified and recognized after August 3rd.

Contact information for _____:

Phone: _____

Email: _____



Trip Route for **Walk Across Minnesota** Challenge

Leg 1: St. Paul (start from the state Capitol steps) to Duluth – 150 miles via I-35. *Duluth Mile Marker: 150 miles.*

- What to look for along this leg of the trip –
 - See Minnesota summer greenery at its best along the Gateway State Trail. This paved trails starts in St. Paul, north of the state Capitol and travels through Phalen-Keller Regional Park and several suburban communities on its way to rural Washington County, with views of ponds, wetlands and woods.
 - In Duluth, take Skyline Parkway to Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve. Hawk Ridge provides some of North America’s best autumn hawk watching. Hawks migrate from as far away as the Arctic towards wintering areas as distant as South America.
 - Tip: Explore local trails and paths. Enjoy a beautiful walk around a lake or find a hiking trail. To find trails, paths and more activity opportunities, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_trails/list.html .

Leg 2: Duluth to Walker – 133 miles via MN-200. *Walker Mile Marker: 283 miles.*

- What to look for along this leg of the trip –
 - After you reach Walker, enjoy a fall hike at nearby Itasca State Park where the Mississippi River trickles out of a spring-fed lake. Walk across the headwater stones where the Mississippi begins its 2552-mile journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Don’t fall in! If you want to go swimming, check out a local indoor pool.
 - Tip: Find an activity buddy. Invite a friend or family member to be active with you. Find an activity that you both enjoy. Encourage and motivate each other!

Leg 3: Walker to Alexandria – 110 miles via US-71 and MN-29. *Alexandria Mile Marker: 393 miles.*

- What to look for along this leg of the trip –
 - Did the Vikings explore Minnesota long before Columbus made his voyage? The Kensington Runestone Museum in Alexandria features a rock allegedly inscribed by Vikings in 1362. A farmer found the large stone in his field in 1898. Ever since, there’s been an ongoing controversy over the authenticity of the stone. Decide for yourself. That farmer must have been a weightlifter to be able to remove the runestone from his field!
 - Tip: Many Community Education Programs have adult athletic leagues and a variety of recreational activities. Contact your local school district for more information.

Leg 4: Alexandria to New Ulm – 154 miles via I-94 and MN-15. *New Ulm Mile Marker: 547 miles.*

- What to look for along this leg of the trip –
 - Climb the hill to Hermann Heights Park in New Ulm to see the Hermann Monument, affectionately known as “Hermann the German”. The overall monument is 102 feet tall and is the second tallest stature monument in the United States, second only to the Statue of Liberty.
 - True to German tradition, there’s a glockenspiel in downtown New Ulm. The glockenspiel is a musical clock tower with animated figures that move as the hour chimes.
 - Tip: Fitness facilities and/or community recreation centers offer a wide variety of programs and classes year round. Visit a facility in your community. Check whether you are eligible for an employee discount at the local YMCA or other fitness facility. For fitness programs that you can do in your own home, go to www.strongwomen.com.

Leg 5: New Ulm to St. Paul – 104 miles via US 14 and US 169. *St. Paul Mile Marker: 651 miles.*

- What to look for along this leg of the trip –
 - Hike along the trails at Flandrau State Park by New Ulm. The trail runs through hardwood forest and grasslands.
 - Stop off for a walk at the Mall of America, the nation’s largest retail and entertainment complex. One lap around the first level is about ½ mile. Exercise and window-shop at the same time. Better leave the credit cards at home!
 - Tip: For other malls near you, visit www.mplsheart.org/education/education_riskfactors_physical_mallwalk.asp for Mall Walking sites.



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Weekly Log for Team Members

Name: _____

Week of: _____

<i>Day of the Week</i>	<i>Type(s) of Activity</i>	<i>Minutes</i>	<i>Bonus Points</i>
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
<i>TOTAL for the week</i>		<i>Minutes:</i>	<i>Bonus Points:</i>

- Count the amount spent each day doing the following activities:
 - Walk, run, bicycle, rollerblading, treadmill walking, exercise bicycle, swim, aerobic dance, row, jump rope, strength training, dance, basketball, soccer, racquetball, tennis, golf, volleyball, yard work, football, softball, baseball, yoga, skiing, shoveling and bowling. See the Rules sheet for more information on activities that count.
- Log your daily minutes on this sheet. Total the weekly minutes each Sunday. Total the bonus points column separately.
- Each Monday morning, report your weekly minutes and bonus points to your team captain.



Bonus Points for **Walk Across Minnesota** Challenge

Week 1: Monday June 22 – Sunday June 28

- Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes spent biking on any established bike trail up to a maximum of 5 bonus points for this activity.
- Receive 1 bonus point for bird watching at a local park or nature preserve. Take a child along and get 2 bonus points.
- Wellness bonus points: Receive 1 point for every day that you drink 40 ounces, or more, of water during this week.

Week 2: Monday June 29 – Sunday July 5

- Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes you swim up to a maximum of 10 bonus points for this activity.
- What are you doing to increase your fitness level? Tell a friend or family member what you are doing to increase your physical activity and earn a bonus point. Receive 1 bonus point for every person you tell, up to a maximum of 5 bonus points.
- Wellness bonus points: Receive 1 point for every day that you eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables during this week.

Week 3: Monday July 6 – Sunday July 12

- Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes of using free weights or a weight machine up to a maximum of 5 bonus points for this activity.
- Join others in a rousing game of indoor volleyball or basketball. Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes spent playing any team sport. If you don't have access to a community or fitness center, pop in a fitness video at home and receive one bonus point for every 15 minutes spent exercising. There is a maximum of 5 bonus points for doing one of these activities.
- Wellness bonus points: Receive 1 point for every day that you eat a whole-grain product, breads, cereals, etc., during this week. Look for the word "whole" in front of the grain name on the label.

Week 4: Monday July 13 - Sunday July 19

- Receive 1 bonus point for every 10 flights or floors of stairs climbed, up to a maximum of 5 bonus points per team member for this activity. The 10 flights may be accumulated over a period of days.
- You'll be inspired to go dancing. Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes of steady dancing up to a maximum of 5 bonus points for this activity. For those who don't like to dance in public, put on music at home and dance away!
- Wellness bonus points: Receive 1 point for every day that you take a multi-vitamin during this week.

Week 5: Monday July 20 - Sunday July 26

- Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes of nature walking. If you are not able to go for a nature walk, try something new! Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes trying a new physical activity. There is a maximum of 5 bonus points for these activities.
- Receive 1 bonus point for every 15 minutes for steady walking in a mall or other indoor walking facility, up to a maximum of 10 bonus points.
- Wellness bonus points: Switch to skim milk and receive 1 point for every day you drink skim milk during this week. For those already drinking skim milk, receive 1 point for every day during this week.

