



The **pedometer** is a tool that measures the number of steps taken. This small instrument worn at the hip records a step each time the hip moves up and down. The pedometer is a useful tool because it demonstrates how active or inactive a person is during a period of time. If a person uses a pedometer and finds that they only record 8000 steps each day of a typical week, then they can choose to add a 2000 step walk each day or park the car farther away at the store, walk to school rather than ride in a car, or use the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator. These changes can add steps and lead to better health, performance and appearance.

The human body is designed for walking. It is a gentle, low-impact activity that is inexpensive and safe for people of all ages, does not require any practice, can be done year-round both indoors and outdoors and helps improve health, performance and appearance. For centuries, human beings walked everywhere; however, over the last twenty years, most people now ride in cars instead of walking and spend the majority of their time in front of television or computer screens. Our bodies have not responded positively to this change. Heart disease, obesity, type II diabetes and other preventable diseases have been growing at rapid rates. These preventable problems have been linked to an inactive lifestyle and have been shown to begin in adolescence. It has been reported that five times as many people die from an inactive lifestyle as from car accidents each year. To reverse this trend and improve health, the Five for Life Program recommends that everyone engage in moderate activity for 60 minutes per day. By walking an extra 60 minutes per day, a person will further improve performance and appearance by building muscle and reducing fat mass. Walking, jogging and running are the most natural of all activities.

Besides using time as a measure of activity, another way to link activity to health-related benefits is through the number of steps a person takes each day. The Five for Life Program recommends that a person take at least 10,000 steps a day to maintain good health. Therefore, it is important to take a look at how many steps are taken during a typical day and add steps if necessary by adding a weekly walking routine and/or making lifestyle changes. The pedometer does not show how hard a person has been working (intensity) only the amount of activity completed. By walking up hills or stairs, walking faster thus taking more steps in the same amount of time, and/or increasing the movement to a jog or a run are examples of increased intensity not shown by the pedometer.

Using a pedometer can also help a person see which activities can lead to increased health benefits. Using a pedometer can help a person compare and contrast the number of steps taken while participating in a variety of activities. For example, if a person wears a pedometer while playing 3-on-3 basketball for one hour and then again while playing volleyball, she/he can see which activity gives her/him the opportunity for the most steps. A person should choose a variety of activities he/she enjoys, but remember to remain healthy and fit, it is important to take at least 10,000 steps a day. By wearing a pedometer, a person can begin to see which activities lead to the most health benefits. A person can also get real information about his/her own activity level. Wearing a pedometer is a great way to count steps toward better health, performance and appearance.



**Key vocabulary words that will be introduced during this unit are:**

- **Pedometer** – A small instrument worn at the hip that records steps