

Health walks – Frequently Asked Questions

Are health walks free?

Yes, walks are free however some individual groups may have a small annual membership fee to cover costs such as programme printing and mailouts. Bring some money for refreshments and a bus fare/bus pass for the walks that use public transport.

Do I need to book to attend a health walk?

Each walking group decides on their own booking policy so check the individual walks programme to see if booking is required for all walks or just walks with a restricted number of participants. A mini bus walk always requires booking as walker numbers are restricted to number of seats on the bus.

How long are health walks?

Health walks range from a few metres to 4 miles (10 minutes to 2 hours). Most walking groups use a grading system and symbols to indicate how long a particular walk is.

How do I join a health walk?

- Find out which open access walking group is nearest you and either download their programme or contact them and ask for a programme to be sent to you.
- Choose a walk to suit your ability and interest.
- Then just turn up for the walk or phone to book first depending on the walking group policy.
- You will be asked to complete a short health questionnaire before your first walk.

If you are new to walking, have special requirements or are not sure where the meeting point is phone the walking group organiser to discuss joining the group.

What should I wear on a health walk?

You need to wear a good pair of shoes that are comfortable, provide good support and don't cause blisters. Clothing needs to allow you to move freely, avoid tight fitting clothes. Lots of thin layers are always better than a few thick ones. Remember to check the weather forecast to see if you need a sun hat and cream, or gloves and an umbrella! A bottle of water is always advisable too.

Who can go on a health walk?

Everyone is welcome to the open access groups but children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Some groups are 'specific membership groups'

Will the health walk still go ahead in bad weather?

Yes, a walk leader will always be at the start regardless of the weather. Walk routes may however be altered on the day depending on weather conditions.

Can I take my dog on a health walk?

Most groups allow dogs providing they are kept on a short lead. Check with the main contact for the group you want to walk with.

I have a health problem. Are these walks for me?

Yes they are. People join in health walks with a variety of health conditions. We ask that you check with your GP before attending to ensure walking is safe for you.

I have special needs. Will health walks cater for me?

We endeavour to provide walks accessible to all. Please contact us to discuss your individual requirements.

Can I have support to get me to the walk start?

Walk leaders need to be at the walk start to take a register and prepare for leading the group. WfH Bristol cannot provide support for walkers to get from their residence to the walk start although we will try to sign post you to another organisation who could assist.

How many walkers go along on health walks?

Across Bristol the average number of walkers on a local health walk is 12 (2009 figures based on the average over 19 Bristol groups). Each group and each walk attracts a varied number of walkers which can range from three or four participants to over 20 walkers. Every six months a WfH partnership walk attracts over 60 walkers.

How often are the walks?

Each group is different. Most groups organise weekly walks. Some groups have a walk a fortnight.

Are there any weekend walks?

Across Bristol most walks are during the week but some groups organise weekend walks. Walks are scheduled according to when leaders are available and willing to lead. Hartcliffe and Withywood leaders mainly lead weekend walks. Most other groups mainly walk on a weekday. Check walk programmes for more details.