

# Linskill Healthy Walks

Planned, organised walks to increase the involvement of people taking part in healthy exercise and improving their health and fitness levels.

*Second Issue*

WHI (Walking the way to Health Initiative) is for everyone with an interest in walking for health. We offer information, support and encouragement to complete beginners, existing walkers and health and leisure professionals.

WHI is an initiative of Natural England and has helped to create more than 536 local health walk schemes.

Walking is set to play a bigger role in creating a healthier nation.

Described by health experts as 'almost perfect exercise', walking requires no equipment or expense and is the ideal way for most people to become more active.

**Join us at the  
Linskill Centre**

**Thursdays at  
10.00am**

**Fridays at  
11.00am**

**Meet inside at the  
reception area**

**Anyone can turn up  
and join in — it's  
FREE and it's FUN!**



*Rebecca, Sandra, Stephen, Andy and David, all from Linskill Healthy Walks.  
The sixth walker, Meiko, took the photo.*

Six Linskill Walkers took part in the recent North Tyneside Council-organised 'Stride out to the Lighthouse', a measured 10 kilometres from The Parks Sports Centre to St Mary's Lighthouse (seven miles in English money!) — That's what they were told anyway! Some felt it was longer!

While the weather certainly didn't provide brilliant sunshine, it stayed dry and was warm, even without the walking.

Literally hundreds took part in the walk, including many family groups — from grandparents to toddlers in buggies — a few in fancy dress raising money for charity, and several participants in wheelchairs.

At the end everyone was



given a certificate to confirm they took part — and a very welcome pack with water and fruit drinks, and there was plenty of fresh fruit available to replace the lost energy.

**Walking is the closest thing to perfect exercise**

## Join a 'Health' Walking Group

Walking in a group is a great way to start walking and to stay motivated. You'll make new friends and maybe discover new places to walk in your neighbourhood.

Walking the way to Health has more than 536 health walk groups across England. Linskill Healthy Walks is one of those groups and we meet for regular walks every Thursday (10am) and every Friday (11am), at Linskill Centre.

**Anyone can turn up and join in — it's FREE and it's FUN.**



## WHI accreditation

Linskill Healthy Walks became an accredited scheme in March of this year, successfully meeting the required criteria.

That is offering led walks for beginners (our Friday Walks), meeting the 'Walking the way to Health' safety and insurance standards for our Thursday and Friday walks, and collecting basic monitoring information from both.

As an accredited scheme, Linskill Healthy Walks will benefit from being seen as part of a nationally evaluated scheme as well as being formally recognised by health professionals, prospective partners and funders.

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William Bird, Strategic Health Advisor for Natural England says:

*"The new accreditation scheme has been essential in ensuring high standards across the WHI network and providing frontline health professionals with added confidence when referring their patients on."*

Linskill Healthy Walks welcomes new walkers throughout the year. If you'd like to walk with us you can:

- just turn up on one of the days;
- call in to Linskill Centre and ask at the reception;
- or you can call Andy on 07985 155 734.



**Sandra, Meiko, Andy and Stephen on the walk to St Mary's Lighthouse**

# Tackling Obesity

Obesity is one of the biggest health challenges we face.

Almost 1 in 4 adults in England are currently obese, and if we carry on as we are, 9 in 10 adults will be overweight or obese by 2050. The cost of overweight and obese individuals to the NHS is estimated to be £4.2 billion. Health walks have an important role to play here.

Obese people are those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of more than 30. In 2007 almost a quarter of all adults were obese and the number is rising. Those with a BMI of 25 to 30 are deemed to be overweight and, in the same year, this applied to 65% of men and 56% of women.

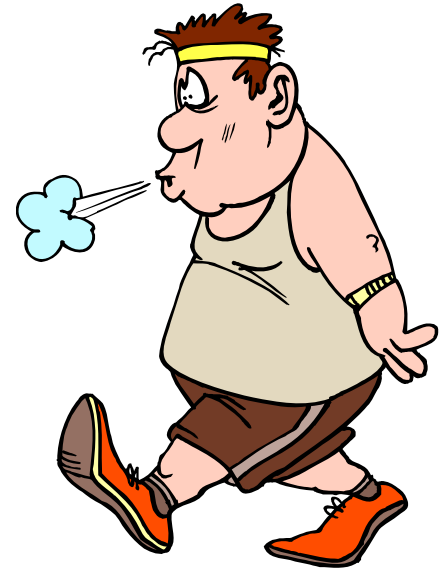
The prevalence of overweight/obesity varies by age and is lowest in the 16-24 age group although this is also the group experiencing the largest increase in overweight adults. Obesity levels for children aged six have doubled in the last ten

years, and have tripled in 15-year-olds.

Obese people associated with being most at risk also tend to be physically inactive. Obesity and lack of physical activity are currently the greatest public health challenges facing the UK government.

Those who undertake regular moderate physical activity reduce the risk of up to 20 chronic diseases and disorders. Obesity is one of these but others include heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. People who are obese are far more likely to suffer from these other conditions.

However, even though most adults perceive themselves to be fairly active, 60% of men and 72% of women do not take enough physical activity to benefit their health. The good news is that, compared to 1997, more people are now walking briskly as a form of exercise — approximately



one-third of men and a quarter of women — but there is still a long way to go.

The Government's physical activity guidelines for adults recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on 5 or more days of the week.

In 2010, it is likely that these recommendations will increase from 30 minutes to one hour. For most people, health walks are an ideal way to meet these recommendations.



*Nice to sit down isn't it? Especially if you've just had to climb up a load of stairs! As this group had too — when they found out the escalator wasn't working at the north end of the Tyne Pedestrian Tunnel! Good exercise though!*

 Walk more...  
feel the difference

## Walking the way to Health (WHI)

Walking the way to Health is the largest national body promoting and setting the standards for led health walks. It is a Natural England initiative.

WHI aims to get more people walking in their own communities, especially those who take little exercise or live in areas of poor health. The initiative has helped to create 525 local health walk schemes across England and has trained over 34,000 Volunteer Walk Leaders.

WHI support schemes through training for walk leaders, advice on setting up a new scheme, insurance, evaluation and free leaflets to help promote walking.

Our health walks are free to participants and provide an easy way of getting regular exercise. There is compelling evidence of the benefits of moderate physical activity.

Those who exercise enjoy greater life expectancy with reduced risks of coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, colonic cancer and osteoporosis.

Walking can also be a catalyst for connecting people with many other aspects of health, such as healthy eating, stopping smoking and relaxation. Many WHI health walk schemes have their own web page on the WHI Walk Finder, displaying details of their walks and how to get involved.

[www.whi.org.uk](http://www.whi.org.uk)

## Natural England

Natural England works for people, places and nature to conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas. They conserve and enhance the natural environment for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people, and the economic prosperity it brings.

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

# New Partners

In an encouraging new development, Natural England is to work in partnership with the Department of Health (DH) to expand WHI over the next 3 years.

Announced as part of the Department of Health's 'Be Active, Be Healthy' strategy, this is a testament to the hard work of everyone involved in WHI. It provides good opportunities for health walks to be adopted and recognised by the NHS as a normal part of healthcare.

In practice, this should mean that more NHS patients will be referred to local health walks. Natural England will also be encouraging the NHS to make their local green spaces available as part of a wider Natural Health Service.

Recruiting volunteer health walk leaders from within local communities has been so successful that any new projects will be based on this model.

Although the new funding is not sufficient to give grant support to individual schemes, other forms of support and encouragement will be provided through:

- a wider range of modular training courses;
- improved support for volunteer walk leaders;
- continuing development of the Outdoor Health Questionnaire (OHQ);
- providing marketing expertise to enable local schemes to build stronger partnerships with PCTs and Local Authorities.



*Who risk-assessed this route? It's a dead end!*



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