

BodyWorks

Start to finish: Walk or run your first 5K



[By William Weese, M.D.](#)

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Have you seen flyers for 5K races and wondered if you could do that? At 3.1 miles, it's an attainable goal for many people — even for most beginners.

Training for one can help you get in shape and stay motivated to exercise — whether you choose to run or walk. And, since many races are charity events, doing it for a worthy cause may give you some added inspiration.

Pointers for first-timers

Your first step should be to talk with your doctor. Make sure it's safe to increase your activity level.

Once you have an OK, train gradually. And, be patient — some people will be ready for a race in about five weeks, others may need longer.

How often? You might start by walking or running four times a week. And, each week, take a day or two off to give your body a break. Use your off days to fit in additional activities, such as strength training.

How long? If it feels doable, begin with 20 to 25 minutes at a time. Even 10 minutes is a good start. Increase your time only when you feel ready. Listen to your body — pushing yourself too hard could result in injury.

How far? As you add time, your distance will gradually increase, as well. To measure how far you're going, you might try a website that lets you plot routes on a map — and calculates mileage for you. Or, use your car's odometer or a GPS device to check the distance on a route. You could also walk or run at a track. A lap is typically one-quarter mile.

This approach should help you determine when you're ready for 3.1 miles. The goal isn't to do that distance each outing. In fact, you'll want to taper off a bit before race day, so you're not overly fatigued.

Other steps to success:

- Wear shoes meant for walking or running.
- Be consistent. It might help to train with a friend or keep an activity log.
- Stay hydrated. Drink fluids before, during and after exercise.

Which shoes to use

Find the perfect fit at myuhc.com[®]. Click "Health & Wellness," and then type "athletic shoes" into the search box.