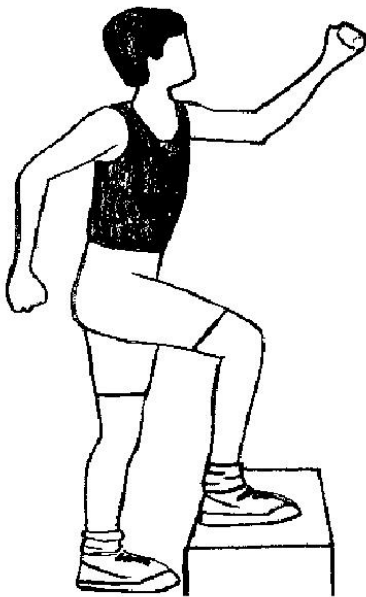


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# Stair stepping tips



Stepping on a single stair step is a convenient workout done anywhere, even at the office. It can be the “cardio” part of your regular workout for heart/lung benefits. Or do shorter sessions throughout the day (at the office too) to strengthen leg muscles and burn calories. For example, a 135 lb person can burn about 150 calories in 20 minutes of stair-stepping.

Begin with a seven-inch height or less. A higher platform quickly exhausts those who are unfit and may cause injury. Use a sturdy box or the bottom step of a staircase (the standard stair step height is about seven inches). Gradually increase the height as fitness improves, but never higher than a height that causes the knees to bend more than 90 degrees.

Use the proper technique to avoid injury: Place the entire foot on the step to distribute body weight evenly over the whole foot. When stepping off the platform, step *down*, not *back* (always land with toes close to the step’s base) — reaching too far back with the leading leg when stepping down results in sore calves. It also makes the body lean forward, putting more stress on the low back and ball of the foot.

Step up with your left foot and then up with the right. Next, step down with the left and follow with the right (change the leading foot periodically). Repeat this stepping pattern at a steady, controlled pace. A general recommendation is approximately 118 - 120

steps per minute. To make the workout harder (and still keep it safe), add more arm movement instead of increasing speed.

For quick, calorie-burn breaks at home or at the office, step for several two-minute sessions throughout the day. But slip into supportive shoes first to absorb the repetitive shock on your feet, calves and knees: Cross-training or aerobic shoes offer adequate shock absorbency and stability due to the wider heel. And don't forget to do a few leg stretches afterward.

If you have chronic pain under or around the kneecap, stepping may not be a suitable exercise for you. Check with a physiotherapist.

*Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Now retired, she was a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and gave speaking presentations to business and private groups on various health topics. <https://www.artnews-healthnews.com/health-writing>*

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