

The Benefits of Walking



During this period of isolation, it is important to maintain our physical and mental wellbeing. One way in which we can do this is to simply go out for a walk.

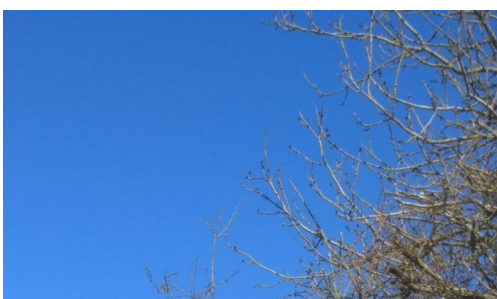
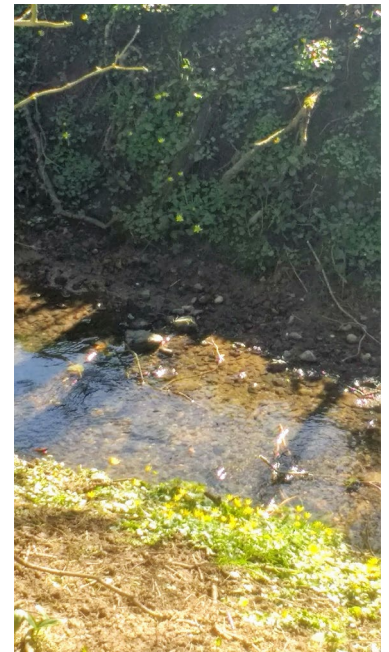
The government has recently produced a series of guidelines to help protect us from the spread of Covid-19, which largely involves isolation and social distancing. We can, however, go for a walk each day if we stay at least 6ft away from people we don't normally live with and we keep our time away from home to a minimum.

So, what are the benefits of walking? Much of this will depend on how quickly you decide to walk. The NHS website states that "walking **briskly** can help you build stamina, burn excess calories and make your heart healthier". Of course, it is difficult to define the term **brisk** in precise measures as a brisk walk for one person may be considered slow to another. Therefore, a brisk walk is very much determined by the age and fitness of the walker. The NHS website tries to quantify a brisk walk as "about 3 miles an hour, which is faster than a stroll". For cardiovascular fitness, a brisk walk would need to be of a sufficient intensity to elevate the heart rate, make you feel warmer and a little breathless.



Of course, the speed you choose to walk will depend largely on your aims. From a personal perspective, I like to go for longer walks but at a more modest pace. I will still get some cardiovascular benefits from doing this, but my primary aim is for peace and solitude. Walking is generally seen as being good for mental wellbeing and is used by some to help lift a low mood. This, I feel, is particularly important right now.

Another benefit of walking is that it helps you to become familiar with your environment. You may discover paths you never knew existed or areas of natural beauty right on your doorstep. The bridge that crosses this small brook is very close to my home. I wouldn't have discovered it had I chose not to put on my walking shoes and go out exploring.



Countryside walking is particularly great for those interested in wildlife. We spotted a kite this morning circling overhead. I tried to catch it in the photo to the left, but my antiquated camera lacked adequate shutter speed and zoom. I ended up photographing a bunch of branches. You may, however, spot the large frog sitting in the brook.

If you are interested in walking you can find more information on www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/