

# What I love about walking

Walking is the best exercise. It is what we do best. As everyone knows, it costs nothing except perhaps a good pair of shoes. It makes me look after my feet and I know that if I could not walk, life would not be very enjoyable. Walking makes me feel good. It makes me less hungry. When I return from a short, brisk walk I am on a high because I walk tall, stretch my legs and breathe deeply.



However it is the social side of walking that I love most. I am very lucky to have found a walking group in the country where my husband and I retired to twenty years ago. That group has become our family. We walk on Wednesday mornings every week of the year and the group is now 23 years old with membership increased to over 50 people.

Walking makes talking easier as the oxygen goes into our lungs and brain and the words flow. We can talk to each other about problems, achievements or exciting events in our own families and share in joys and sorrows. We can usually find someone who is an expert on just about everything under the sun. We laugh and enjoy each other's company and talk freely to whoever is walking beside us at the time.

As members have become older there are sometimes medical appointments that have to be made but members always try to avoid walking day. Their families know not to ring them on Wednesdays. Members love this group so much that they will turn up in all weathers, walking in rain, occasional snow, wind and heat, although now that our average age would be late 70's we are careful not to get heat stressed. We have celebrations for special birthdays and twice yearly camps. We give an OBE (Over Bloody Eighty) medal when someone turns 80 and we have eleven members over 80 and one over 90 still walking

most weeks which is an indication of the health benefits of regular walking in a social situation.



The group was started in 1987 by our local community health centre nurse and is still supported by the Community Health Service although we do all the organising ourselves. We have a yearly roster where each member chooses a date to lead a walk which is checked out by that person who becomes the leader for the day.

To quote one appreciative member who wrote in our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book, produced by another member, “I would like to take this opportunity to mention the people who quietly organise and make sure we have a nice hot cuppa, milk, sugar, bikkies, clean cups, hot water, walk rosters, bus trips, Christmas lunches, phone number lists, birthday lists, great camps and social nights”.



Valerie Kip

Cobaw Wednesday Walkers