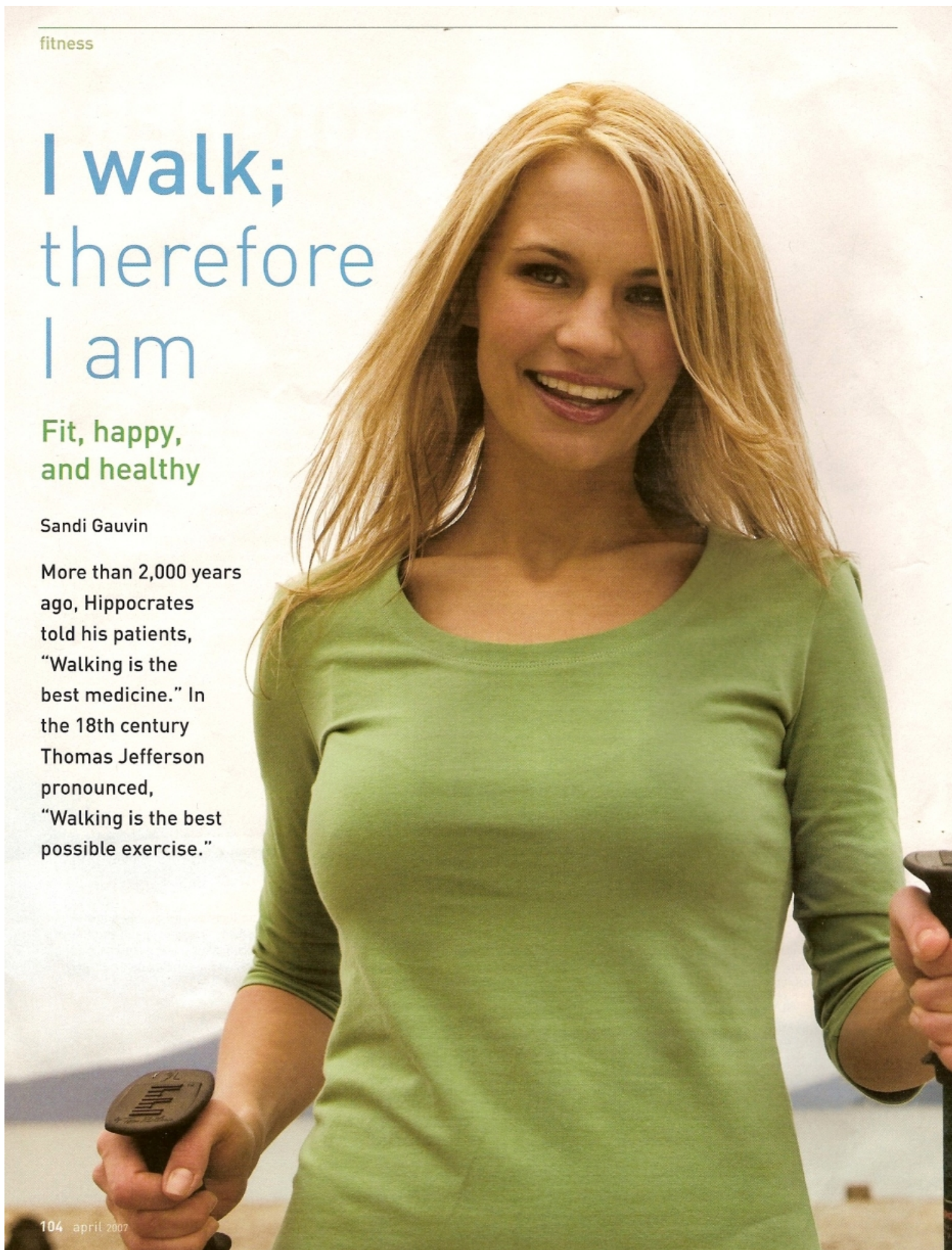


I walk; therefore I am

Fit, happy,
and healthy

Sandi Gauvin

More than 2,000 years ago, Hippocrates told his patients, "Walking is the best medicine." In the 18th century Thomas Jefferson pronounced, "Walking is the best possible exercise."



A century later English historian George Macaulay Trevelyan referred to his own two legs as his doctors. When he was feeling out of sorts either mentally or physically, he called in his “doctors” to take him walking.

Striding toward good health

These great men of history have been validated by 21st-century research that extols, in study after study, the many virtues of walking. The shortlist of health benefits include:

- reduced risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- lower blood pressure
- reduced high cholesterol and improved blood lipid profile
- reduced body fat
- enhanced mental well-being
- increased bone density
- reduced risk of colon cancer
- reduced risk of type 2 diabetes
- controlled body weight
- less osteoarthritis pain
- more flexibility and coordination

Everybody's doin' the locomotion

Walking is simple: you place one foot in front of the other in succession. It's called locomotion. What differentiates

us from other walking mammals is that we've found a variety of ways to benefit from this simple act.

Nordic walking Using specially designed Nordic poles held in each hand to apply force with each stride uses more of the body and burns up to 40 percent more calories than normal walking. Nordic walking stimulates the chest, triceps, biceps, shoulders, abdominals, and other core muscles while applying less stress on the shins, knees, hips, and back. (See alive.com/nordic_walking.php for more on Nordic walking.)

Hill walking Head for the hills to burn calories. Even a modest 3- to 8-percent incline can increase calorie burn by 20 percent. Walking up a 15-percent slope uses about a third more energy than walking on a flat surface. Walking uphill uses the muscles in the front of your thigh and in your buttocks, while walking downhill works your leg muscles as they maintain your balance.

To increase efficiency while walking up an incline, take shorter steps than normal. To minimize impact on knees when walking downhill, keep them slightly bent at all times with your torso upright or leaning slightly forward for stability.



Walking qigong

Essentially a form of meditation while walking, this is a gentle exercise that is thought to calm the mind while improving general health. Qigong (*qi* is breath or vital life force and *gong* is to work or cultivate the qi), a component of traditional Chinese medicine, has a basic aim to bring the body into a state of balance and self-regulation.

Walking qigong was first developed to offer an alternate therapy for cancer patients. It is now practised by many people who simply want to engage their body and mind to achieve a sense of control.

Victoria Annual Walking Festival, April 20 to 22, 2007

Every year for nine years Victoria, BC has hosted the only walking festival in Canada sanctioned by the IML Walking Association, which represents 24 nations from Europe, North America, and Asia. Victoria's weekend of activities will draw walkers from around the world who will participate in one or all of the following activities:

- 9th Annual Blossom Walk
- International Friendship Walk
- International Walkers' Dinner
- Walk EXPO
- walking seminars
- Blister Party
- live entertainment, food, and refreshments

For more information go to walkvictoria.ca.

Photo by Carmen Schmid.

Model Samira Dudzinski and makeup artist Melanie Neufeld by Lizbell Agency.



Slow vs. fast walking

Strolling at a moderate pace has health benefits such as reducing stress. It can also help obese adults burn more calories per mile than brisk walking, while lowering the risk of arthritis and joint injuries.

For others, brisk walking—at least 2 miles (3.2 km) in 30 minutes—offers a faster route to weight loss. Walking fast allows you to cover more ground and work more muscles than walking slowly. At a very quick pace, you can burn almost as many calories as you do while jogging, with less stress on your body.

Daily constitutional, walking the dog, schlepping, going for an airing, or just simply going for a stroll—no matter what you call it, putting one foot in front of the other in a sustained and purposeful way will have you striding toward good health. **a**

Sandi Gauvin, editor at *alive* magazine, takes herself—and anyone she can coax along—for an airing every day.

If the shoe fits

Good quality, well-fitting shoes not only make your walk more pleasurable but also prevent blisters, calluses, and other injuries. How do you determine the right fit?

Width

The side-to-side fit should be snug, but not tight. Women with wider feet might consider men's or boys' shoes, which are cut wider through the heel and ball of the foot.

Length

There should be at least a half-inch between your longest toe and the end of the shoe. If you can't fit the width of your finger in the end of the shoe, try a larger size.

Arch type

Choose shoes that accommodate your arch type: low, neutral, or high. If your wet footprint shows most of your foot, you have low arches; if little of your foot shows, you have high arches.

- Neutral-arched feet are not overly arched or overly flat. Look for shoes with firm midsoles, straight to semicurved lasts, and moderate rear-foot stability.
- Low-arched feet tend to roll inward, causing muscle stress and joint problems in feet and knees. Look for shoes with motion control for stability.
- High-arched feet may not absorb shock well, causing excessive strain on joints and muscles. Look for cushioning for shock absorption.