



e-quilibrium

- *"electronic briefs on behavior and health"*

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Miles

"I'd walk a mile for a Camel." This advertising slogan for Camel cigarettes debuted in 1921 and is considered one of the top 50 advertising campaigns of all time. I remember seeing billboards in the 1970s using this slogan, also picturing shoe soles in which one had a hole worn in it.

For what would you be willing to walk a mile? One of the common ways for organizations to raise money is to sponsor walks in which participants get others to pledge money for the organization's cause. Examples include the "Heart Walk," "Alzheimer's Memory Walk," and the "Breast Cancer 3-Day."

Walking is the most basic form of physical activity and mobility for human beings. However, with advances in various forms of transportation, walking is sometimes viewed as something to be avoided, or at least something that requires a good deal of effort. Others view walking as a great way to exercise, a healthy way to relax, or a pleasant activity to do with friends or loved ones. In any case, if a person walks a mile or more, it is typically because there is something of perceived value to be attained. Walking is unmistakably a behavior that can reduce one's susceptibility to or the severity of a variety of health problems, including overweight and obesity.

It is frequently said that people burn approximately 100 calories to go one mile by walking or running. This number is imprecise, according to exercise scientists, because running burns more calories than walking the same distance and a

person's weight affects calories burned. However, 100 calories per mile is still a convenient round number to use for the energy demands of going one mile.

There are many factors that affect weight management, but energy balance remains a fundamental principle. If energy in is greater than energy out, a person gains weight. Approximately 3500 excess calories adds one pound. If energy out is greater than energy in, a person loses weight. (A deficit of approximately 3500 calories results in a loss of one pound.) Using the 100 calories/mile formula, one must walk a lot of miles (about 35) in order to lose one pound!

When considering an edible treat, it can be useful to ask how many miles one would be willing to walk for that delicacy in order to maintain the energy balance. That is, to offset the caloric intake of the indulgence, how far would one need to walk? At 100 calories/mile, is 2 miles for a latte or beer, 3 miles for a candy bar, 8 miles for a hamburger and order of fries, or 10 miles for a piece of cheesecake worth the effort? I do hope that none of you would be willing to walk a mile for a cigarette.

In recent years, the slogan "10,000 Steps a Day" has been used in many health promotion programs. (This translates to approximately 5 miles a day for the average person with a 2.5 foot gait.) Pedometers can be a useful tool to keep track of steps taken or miles walked. Most people report walking more than usual when first wearing a pedometer. (This is an example of how monitoring behavior typically changes behavior in the desired direction.) Whether or not a pedometer is used, health is indeed worth walking for!

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