Walking after dark: Be seen and stay safe!

Location: British Columbia

Timeline: Fall / Winter 2019-2020

Walking offers numerous benefits, including boosting your immune system, aiding sleep and reducing stress.

But because of limited light with the shortened days, extra precautions should be taken to ensure you are safe when walking after dark.

Here are five tips to help you stay safe at night while enjoying your walking workout:

1. WEAR GEAR FOR VISIBILITY
   When it’s dark out, make sure other pedestrians and motorists see you. In limited light ensure you can see where you’re. Here are some items to keep you safe and seen:
   - Headlamp/flashlight.
   - Reflective clothing.
   - Reflective arm/ankle bands.

2. BRING A FRIEND
   Recruit a co-worker, friend, or family member, or dog! Not only will it be more enjoyable, but it’ll also be safer.

3. FOLLOW NIGHTTIME SAFETY RULES
   While it’s always important to follow basic traffic laws, at night it’s especially important to stay safe. Here are some safety rules you should always abide by when it’s dark:
   - Walk facing traffic so you can react quickly.
   - Always use sidewalks and off-road, multi-use paths when possible. Don’t assume others see you. Take extra precautions and always be alert when crossing the street or using crosswalks.
   - Keep your head up, looking for hazards 10–15 feet in front of you.
   - Avoid distractions that can cause you to lose focus like your phone or listening to music.
4. HAVE A PLAN
Let a friend or family member know exactly what route you’re taking and what time you plan to return.

Have a way for them to contact you (carry your phone) and let this person know what they should do if you don’t arrive at a specified time.

When possible, choose areas that are well-lit and walk in familiar neighbourhoods or places.

5. TAKE EXTRA SAFETY PRECAUTIONS
You should always prepare for the worst-case scenario. This could be a dead battery on your phone, an unexpected encounter with an animal on a trail or an injury.

While you can’t prepare for everything, there are a few things you can bring on your walk that might help out in the event things don’t go as planned.

These basics include:

- **Identification**: You don’t need to carry your full wallet, but having your ID on you at all times is a must.
- **Cash**: It’s a good idea to have a small amount of cash on-hand just in case you need to catch a ride home.
- **A whistle**: This can help scare off attackers and animals or draw attention to you.
- **Smartphone**: This helps you stay in touch with loved ones and call for help, if needed.

**Resources**: Reflective clothing, including wrist, arm and ankle bands, can be obtained at most safety supply stores.