



American Heart  
Association



*Learn and Live*®

As part of a national effort to combat heart disease and get Americans moving, the American Heart Association is encouraging people to take control of their health by walking and making other healthy life changes. Southern Illinois' own Debbi Waters was chosen as one of six challengers nationwide to participate in the first-ever National Start! Challenge, running from January through mid-April 2008. By participating in this challenge, Debbi is publicly committing that she is ready to abandon excuses and develop a healthy lifestyle.

Debbi is a wife and mother of two teenage children. She is a critical care nurse as well as a part time student completing her BSN degree. "As a nurse, I know what I should be doing to lead a healthier lifestyle, however up until now I haven't been very successfully motivated to do so. I have a history of gestational diabetes and was recently told that I am a type 2 diabetic, which I continue to deny. The Start! Challenge will be a great way for me to make sure my blood sugars do not get out of control as well as a way to shed about 20 pounds. It is time for me to start eating right, moving more and living a healthier lifestyle."

Debbi has become more determined with each passing month to improve her health stats. She's been following the American Heart Association's recommended physical activity guidelines and reading the No Fad Diet Book to help implement life changes at home. The Start! Challenge encourages taking simple steps, such as walking daily, to improve heart health. People who want to support Debbi can read her blog, comment to offer encouragement, vote and incorporate the Start! Challenge into their lives. MyStart! Online, the web-based program Debbi has been using to track her health and fitness, along with Debbi's blog, is available to everyone at [heart.org/start](http://heart.org/start).

The American Heart Association has been tracking the health of Debbi and the other five challengers for the past three months. An online vote, blog assessment and American Heart Association panel review will determine the winner, who will be announced on National Start! Walking Day, April 16, 2008.

## Why Walking?

It's simple. Americans simply are not getting enough physical activity and physical activity is fundamental to good health. Studies show that adults may gain as much as two hours of life expectancy for each hour of regular vigorous exercise - like very brisk walking.

**It's simple. Walking is easy and free.  
You can do it at work.**

- Walking is safe and easy on your body.
- Park farther away.
- Walking requires no equipment.
- Take the stairs.
- Walking improves your circulation.
- Hop off the subway or bus a stop or two earlier.
- Walking improves your energy level.
- Walk to lunch.
- Walking reduces stress and anxiety.
- Walking improves enthusiasm and optimism.
- Walking improves muscle tone and strength and increases circulation.
- Walking reduces blood cholesterol, blood pressure and bone loss.
- Walking reduces weight.

**It's simple. Walk for at least 30 minutes  
during your workday on April 16, 2008.**

