

**Meningitis
now**

Training Guide

Mountain Hiking





So, you've signed up for a hiking challenge?

Mountain walking is a completely different experience to an afternoon ramble, and it takes a fair amount of physical and mental training and preparation - but don't panic! By breaking your training down into manageable chunks, you'll be giving yourself a great chance of achieving your goal, whether it's tackling the three tallest mountains in the UK in 36 hours on the Three Peaks Challenge or taking on a multi-day overseas expedition. Don't be put off by something that's further ahead in the plan; you're not expected to be as fit as you'll be at the end of the plan before you've even started!

This guide will talk you through everything you'll need to get you trek-ready, including:

- Gear** What footwear, clothing and equipment to look for.
- Fuel** Advice and recommendations for nutrition and hydration.
- Training** Tips and guidance for getting the most out of your training, plus a 12-week plan and strength exercises to get you used to walking on a gradient.

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Gear

Hiking is one of those activities where, for a few of the key items of equipment, getting the best that your budget allows will make all the difference to your comfort and enjoyment. Here are some things to look out for.

Walking boots

If you skimp on these you'll regret it! Buy the best you can afford, but above all else, **ensure that they are well broken in.**

Well looked-after leather boots should keep you dry and your ankles well-supported, but some of the quality fabric boots are now very good, and with Gore-Tex uppers, offer breathability.

Shoes, trainers or mid ankle boots are not suitable for rough mountain terrain; ankle support is essential to avoid injury.



When trying boots on, make sure you're wearing the same socks that you'll be wearing on the mountains to ensure they're fitted correctly. Your feet will swell slightly as you walk so if your boots are on the snug side to start with it's worth going up a size, or trying a different brand or model.

Walking socks

Again, go for quality; some of the Coolmax range are excellent. Loop pile offers cushioning. Avoid ribbed socks as these tend to rub.

If you're prone to blisters you can try wearing a thin sock underneath the thicker walking sock, or look for walking socks with twin skins.

Lower body

Choose something comfortable to walk in. Light walking trousers or exercise leggings are usually fine. Avoid jeans - they have seams which tend to chafe and take a long time to dry if they get wet.

Waterproofs

Good quality waterproofs (hooded coat and trousers) are essential, as weather conditions can change quickly and may make the difference in getting to the summit.

Coolmax and Gore-Tex materials wick away moisture from your body, aiding evaporation and thus minimising sweaty, damp clothing.

Upper body

You will probably find yourself constantly layering up and stripping off again as you walk. As you begin walking your temperature will increase, but as soon as you stop you will immediately cool down.

Layering is key. It's a good idea to have several different tops of varying thickness to layer up with. We recommend having several thinner layers rather than ultra-thick layers, as these make it easier for you to manage your temperature.

Look for moisture-wicking fabrics, which pull sweat away from your skin, dry quickly and breathe well to help you regulate your body temperature. Avoid cotton, as it gets wet quickly from sweat and rain and takes longer to dry out.

An example layering combination would be:

- Thermal long-sleeved base layer
- Moisture-wicking t-shirt
- Warm jacket or fleece



Gear

Rucksack

The ideal rucksack / day pack for a mountain hike has a capacity of 30-35 litres. Ensure that your kit fits in and it's comfortable to wear when full. Better quality bags have adjustable back systems for a better fit.

To ensure your kit stays dry, check that your rucksack has a waterproof liner that fits over the outside. You could also place your items into carrier bags or dry bags before packing your rucksack.

Top tip: If you're purchasing a new bag, look for one with waist belt pockets to keep snacks to hand!

Platypus

This is a water bladder that fits inside your rucksack. You drink from the bladder through a long drinking hose, which means you don't have to keep stopping to get water out of your bag.

Survival bag

The survival bag is a heavy duty plastic 'sleeping bag', which can be used to keep warm if you get stuck on the mountains and if you are likely to be inactive for a long period of time. Hopefully you will never have to use it, but for a couple of pounds it is definitely worth bringing this potentially lifesaving item with you.

First aid kit

It's always worth taking a small first aid kit with you if you're out walking for a long time. Your kit should contain antiseptic wipes, sanitising hand gel, blister plasters, headache tablets, anti-inflammatories and a selection of plasters.

Walking poles

Poles aren't everyone's cup of tea, but if you find that your joints are aching they can be useful for taking some of the pressure off, especially on the descents.

If you prefer to walk with poles, make sure they're adjusted to the correct height; on a level surface, your forearms should be at 90° to your body.

Leave no trace

Every year, volunteer teams climb the most popular mountains and hiking routes in the UK specifically to pick up bagfuls of litter that's been dropped over the season - everything from fruit peel and toilet paper to broken hiking equipment, tents and even a toilet!

To help preserve our beautiful countryside, anything that you carry onto the mountain should be carried off with you.

Please refer to the Countryside Code (England and Wales) and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (Scotland) for more information.

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code
- www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/



Fuel

There are a lot of articles and theories around nutrition and hydration, but here are a few basics that will help to aid and enhance your hill-walking experience.

Eat smart

Before

This is not the time to be on a low-carb diet! Quite often, hiking naturally suppresses your appetite but you'll be burning lots of calories as you walk, so if you don't fuel properly beforehand you run the risk of burning out. Easily digestible carbs like whole-wheat toast, porridge, rice, wholegrain pasta and fruit will stop you from feeling sluggish. Try to incorporate protein as well - yoghurt, eggs, cheese and lean meat are perfect.

During

Depending on how long you're walking for, you'll need to supplement your meals with high energy snacks, which you can carry with you as you climb. High carbohydrate and protein foods like fruit, nuts, chocolate, jelly babies, cereal bars, protein bars, oatcakes etc. are best.

It's also a good idea to carry a salty snack with you as you'll be losing electrolytes as you sweat, which puts you at risk of cramp. Ready salted or salt and vinegar crisps are the perfect blend of salt and carbohydrates.

You should be aiming to snack at least once an hour during your hike, even if you don't really feel like it. This will help maintain your blood sugar levels and improve your endurance, rather than letting your energy peak and plummet.

After

Replacing carbohydrates and protein immediately after exercise is the most effective way of enhancing recovery and maintaining your energy levels long-term. You should aim to refuel within one hour of your hike; as a guideline, a ratio of 1:3 protein to carbs is recommended, whether as a snack or a good meal.

Stay hydrated

You will get hot and sweaty as you walk and you need to make sure you replenish lost body fluids. You should be drinking plenty of water - around two litres - throughout the day anyway, but adding exercise into your routine calls for a higher water intake. If you're out on a long training walk, you should aim to take 1-1.5 litres with you and take sips throughout. If you feel thirsty, you're already heading towards dehydration.



Training

Health checklist

Before you get stuck in with your training, it's a good idea to check there aren't any medical reasons why you shouldn't take on an exercise programme. Have a look at the checklist below and if you answer 'Yes' to some or all of the questions and you have any concerns, we advise you to make an appointment with your GP and request a check-up.

If you answer 'No' to all of these questions or have the all-clear from your GP, it's time to get going!

	YES	NO
Do you suffer from any medical conditions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you smoke, or have you recently given up?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you currently suffering from any injuries?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you currently take any prescribed medication?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you unsure about beginning an exercise programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When to train

Everyone has a preferred time to exercise and ultimately, there is no right or wrong time as long as it works for you. It doesn't even have to be the same time each time; for example, you may choose to do your walks in the morning or on a weekend, but your running / cycling / swimming and strength work in the evening. Just make sure that you're giving your body enough time to rest and recover between sessions.

Where to train

Generally speaking, you can undertake your training wherever you like, whether you stay indoors on the treadmill and in the gym, find a good hiking trail in your area or run around the pavements, paths and parks locally. Don't forget, the best training for mountain walking is... mountain walking! Regardless of how far it is, walking on the flat won't engage your climbing muscles, so try to incorporate as many hills as you can on your longer training walks.

Stay safe - if a path or gradient looks unsuitable or dangerous, it's better to turn back than push yourself beyond your means to carry on.

Training

Even if you already have a good level of fitness, it's important to train your muscles for mountain walking.

On the next page is a 12-week training plan to help prepare you for difficult mountain walking. The fitter you are the more you will enjoy the challenge. Please note, this is a guide only; you can swap days around to suit you but try to stick to the same amount of exercise and rest days as shown. There is also a guide to some basic strengthening exercises on pages 9 and 10, which you may wish to add in two to three times a week.

Whilst in training, make sure you stay hydrated (drink around two litres of water per day) and keep your energy levels up by eating plenty.

If you are a member of a gym, the following plan can be carried out there. You need to make sure you build up your endurance levels - use the treadmill and make use of the incline settings.

At walking pace gradually increase the incline until you can walk at 5kmh for an hour. This can be done as follows:

Start at 5% incline and do 10 minutes

Increase to 7.5% and do 15 minutes

Increase to 10% and do 10 minutes

Decrease to 7.5% and do 10 minutes

Decrease to 5% and do a final 10 minutes

Top tip:

Don't forget to warm up and cool down before and after exercise. Check out the videos on our Training Hub by Meningitis Now's resident fitness enthusiast and qualified personal trainer, Rachel, for some great mobilisation and flexibility exercises.

www.meningitisnow.org/traininghub

If you run on the treadmill, try to run at an incline of 5% or more.



Training plan

Weeks 1 - 4

DAY	ACTIVITY
Monday	REST
Tuesday	40 minute hill walk OR 40 minute flat walk with 15 minutes of step-ups*
Wednesday	Strengthening exercises
Thursday	Cardio session - 30 minutes of running, cycling or swimming
Friday	REST
Saturday	REST
Sunday	1 hour hill walk OR 1 hour flat walk with strengthening exercises

* these can be done at home using your stairs

By week 4 you should be comfortable walking at an average of 3 miles per hour for 4 hours on level ground (this time will be slightly slower on hilly ground).

Weeks 5 - 8

DAY	ACTIVITY
Monday	REST
Tuesday	1 hour hill walk OR 1 hour flat walk with 18 minutes of step-ups*
Wednesday	Strengthening exercises
Thursday	Cardio session - 1 hour of running, cycling or swimming
Friday	REST
Saturday	Stretching / strengthening exercises
Sunday	2 hour hill walk OR 2 hour flat walk with strengthening exercises

* Increase the step ups by 4 minutes for each week so that by the end of week 8 you're doing 30 minutes.

You should now have a good level of cardio fitness and strength. It's time to push your training that bit further to give yourself the absolute best chance of completing the challenge comfortably.

Weeks 9 - 12

DAY	ACTIVITY
Monday	REST
Tuesday	1 hour hill walk OR 1 hour flat walk with 30 minutes of step-ups
Wednesday	Strengthening exercises
Thursday	Cardio session - 60-90 minutes of running, cycling or swimming
Friday	REST
Saturday	Stretching / strengthening exercises
Sunday	3-4 hour hill walk OR 3-4 hour flat walk with strengthening exercises

Strengthening exercises

As part of your training plan, it's a good idea to strengthen your legs, core and upper body with some body-weight exercises. Here are some simple exercises that you can do at home or in the gym.

Squats - 3 sets of 10 reps, with a 30 second break between sets



Key points:

- Stand with feet hip-width apart, facing forward.
- Keep your back and head in a straight line as you lower yourself.
- Make sure your knees stay in line with your feet.
- Press through your heels as you stand back upright.

Lunges / walking lunges - 3 sets of 20 steps, with a 30 second break between sets



Key points:

- Alternate legs with each step.
- Keep your back and head in a straight line.
- Make sure your front knee doesn't come further forward than your toes.
- Take care not to bang your back knee on the floor!
- Press through your heel as you stand back upright.

One-legged deadlift - 3 sets of 10 reps (5 per leg), with a 30 second break between sets



Key points:

- Reaching down to your toes with the opposite hand, keep your back straight, with hips and shoulders always facing forwards.
- Press the heel of your free leg outwards, with toes pointing straight to the floor.
- The knee of the leg on which you're balancing should be slightly bent; the leg stretched behind you should be completely straight.

Strengthening exercises

Box / bench jumps – 3 sets of as many as you can in 1 minute, with a 30 second break between sets



Key points:

- From a standing position, bend your knees slightly .
- Use your arms for momentum and jump explosively, landing squarely with both knees bent.
- Press through your heels to stand up straight at the top of your travel (in the same movement as the upward motion of a squat).
- Step back down; repeat.

Plank – hold for as long as you can



Key points:

- Balance your weight squarely through your toes and forearms.
- Your whole body should be one straight line, from the top of your head down to your heels.
- Draw your navel up towards your spine to keep your core tensed.
- It's normal to get the shakes – try and ride it out for as long as you can!

NB: If you're used to these exercises already you can try adding in some weight to push yourself further. However, if these exercises are new to you don't add any weights in without the guidance and supervision of a fitness instructor to ensure that your form and technique is correct.

Got a question?

Visit our online Training Hub or get in touch.



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