



WALKING

Tips on How to Use Transportation
Options in Florida



[SafeMobilityFL.com](https://www.SafeMobilityFL.com)

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WALKING is a popular physical activity for all ages that can also serve as a useful transportation option to help maintain mobility and independence. Whether you are on foot or use a wheelchair or walker, walking is a healthy, affordable, and environmentally friendly way to travel, especially for shorter distances.

In this booklet we will share the benefits of walking, as well as tips on how to walk safely and defensively. You will also learn about different signs, signals, and markings plus some key Florida laws to help improve your safety while walking.

WALKING AS A TRANSPORTATION OPTION



Walking is not just for recreation. In many cases, it can be used as a simple, low-cost form of transportation. The questions and tips below can help you think about using walking as a transportation option to get around your community.

- ▶ Do you already walk for exercise? Are there parks, restaurants or shopping centers within a comfortable walking distance from your home?
- ▶ Try to combine walking for exercise with running an errand, such as picking up a prescription, having lunch or doing light grocery shopping.
- ▶ Is there a bus stop within walking distance of where you live and the places you need to go?

- ▶ Walking can be used in combination with other modes, such as driving a car, using public transit, or a transportation network company, like Uber or Lyft.
- ▶ Even if you live in a less walkable area, there are ways to incorporate walking in your daily routine. For example, when driving your car to run errands, park in a central location and walk to your destinations.
- ▶ Do you feel comfortable while walking in your community?
- ▶ Try to identify what makes you feel unsafe while walking. You can also bring up your concerns at a neighborhood meeting or with local public representatives.

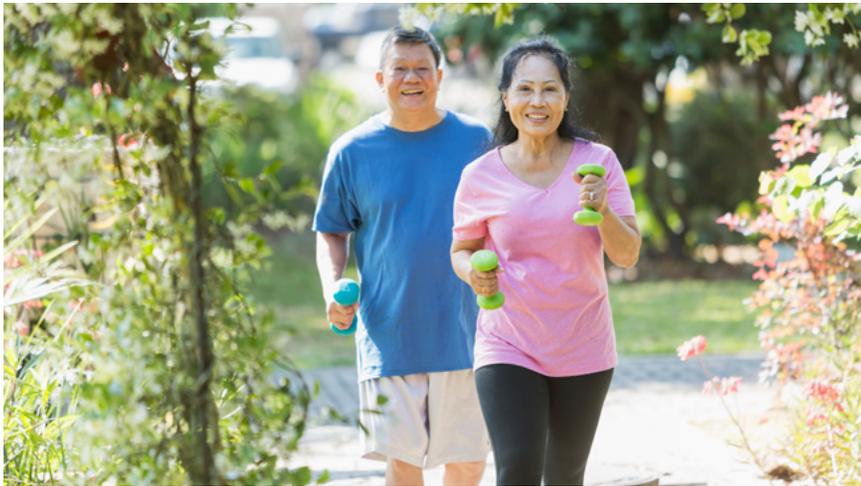
The information in this booklet can be used to provide guidance on how you can feel more comfortable using walking as a mode of transportation.



TIP

Before you begin a walking routine, it is a good idea to talk with your doctor about any health issues that could limit or prevent you from walking.

BENEFITS OF WALKING



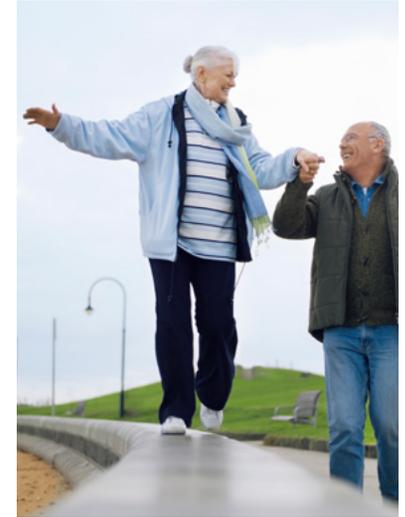
Not only can walking get you where you need and want to go, but it may provide an enjoyable way to improve your health, spend quality time with others, stay involved in the community, save money, and improve the environment.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Walking regularly can help:

- ▶ Lower the risk of:
 - ▶ Heart disease
 - ▶ Stroke
 - ▶ Diabetes
 - ▶ Cancer
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ High cholesterol
- ▶ Osteoporosis
- ▶ Arthritis

- ▶ Maintain a healthy weight
- ▶ Strengthen the heart and improve cardiovascular health
- ▶ Improve balance and coordination
- ▶ Increase flexibility and joint function
- ▶ Reduce anxiety and depression



TIP

By improving balance and coordination, walking can help reduce the risk of falling.

Engaging in regular physical activity such as walking may also make other activities easier, such as gardening, shopping, and household chores. While results may vary, walking can be an ideal, low-impact exercise that may improve your physical and mental well-being.

Walking briskly



for



can burn up to



LIFESTYLE BENEFITS

Social isolation and loneliness can put us at greater risk for potential health problems. Spending time outdoors can not only improve your health but can help you connect with your neighbors and community.

Invite someone to join you on your walk. Walking with a buddy can give you an opportunity to catch up, help you feel safe, and stay motivated. Do you want to meet new people with similar goals? Find a walking group in your community or volunteer to lead one of your own.

To get started, here are a few tips to help find a walking group or club in your area:

- ▶ Check with your co-workers, neighbors, family, and friends.
- ▶ Go to your local community or recreation center, such as your YMCA, to see if they have a walking group.
- ▶ Look for websites like [MeetUp.com](https://www.meetup.com) or the Nextdoor app to find walking groups.

If no groups exist in your community, here are tips on how to start an organized walking group:

- ▶ Ask your senior center, church, or community center to see if they might want to help organize a group.
- ▶ Start a newsletter and use email or a social media platform such as Facebook or Nextdoor to spread

the word about your group. This will also help you keep in regular contact with people who join your group.

- ▶ Meet in a safe and public place. Consider weather, convenience, level of difficulty, and accessibility when choosing a location.
- ▶ Map your walking route in advance and make sure there is room for a group to walk together.
- ▶ Schedule your walk during daylight hours.
- ▶ Avoid busy streets and high-traffic areas.

Other than buying a pair of comfortable walking shoes, walking is the simplest and most affordable mode of transportation. Walking also helps to protect and improve the environment. When you choose to walk, you are helping to reduce roadway congestion and carbon dioxide emissions which can contribute to global warming.



SAFE WALKING TIPS



Many of us will experience the natural physical changes that come with aging, which could impact how safe and comfortable we feel while walking. Although the following information on how to walk safely is relevant for pedestrians of all ages, it is especially important for older adults. Here are some useful tips and ideas you can use to be a safer walker.

FACT

If there is no sidewalk, walk along the grassy shoulder facing traffic, and maintain a safe distance from the travel lane. Section 316.130, Florida Statutes.



GET READY TO WALK

Whether you are going a short distance or for a longer walk, it is always important to be prepared and plan ahead.

- ▶ Dress to be visible and comfortable in all weather conditions.
 - ▶ Wear light-colored clothing during the day and wear reflective materials when walking at night. You may want to carry a flashlight or wear a headlamp for added visibility.
 - ▶ When walking in warmer weather, wear lightweight clothing, a hat, and protect your skin with sunscreen.
 - ▶ Wear appropriate footwear and bring an umbrella in case it rains.
- ▶ Stay hydrated. Bring a water bottle and a snack when taking longer walks.
- ▶ Carry identification, money, and a cell phone for emergencies, even when taking a short walk.
- ▶ Plan your route along streets that make you feel safe and comfortable.



TIP

You can use online tools such as Google Maps to map and measure your walking route.

WALK DEFENSIVELY

While we cannot control what other road users do, we can control our own actions and anticipate potential risks when sharing the road. Defensive walking skills involve identifying situations that carry a higher risk of being involved in a crash and taking steps to control these situations as much as possible.

When crossing the street:

- ▶ Look left, look right, and look left again before entering the roadway.
- ▶ Make eye contact with oncoming drivers but do not assume that they will stop for you.
- ▶ Only enter the crosswalk when you have a Walk signal.
- ▶ Continue to scan the roadway as you cross.
- ▶ If walking across multiple lanes, stop after passing the first car and look to see if another car is coming. Verify the driver sees you and is stopping before continuing to cross.
- ▶ Pay close attention to drivers who may be turning, especially when crossing at intersections, driveways in neighborhoods, or shopping centers.



TIP

Always **STOP** and check for traffic before entering the roadway.

When walking in a parking lot:

- ▶ Be aware of your surroundings and be on the lookout for moving vehicles.
- ▶ Pay attention to vehicles backing out of parking spaces.
 - ▶ Listen for engine noise.
 - ▶ Look for brake lights.
 - ▶ Watch for low or no emission vehicles. They may not make any noise which is why looking for their brake lights is important.
- ▶ Use the main aisle, sidewalks, and marked crosswalks. If possible, avoid walking directly behind or in-between parked cars.



TIP

Never assume a driver sees you.
They may not see you even if you see them.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS

We have all heard about distracted driving and how dangerous it can be. Distracted walking can also put you at risk. It is important to stay alert while you are walking and always watch where you are going.

- ▶ Keep your head and eyes up. Avoid using your cell phone or any handheld electronic devices while you walk.
- ▶ Limit multi-tasking. That includes snacking, listening to music, or reading. All your attention should be focused on your surroundings.
- ▶ Pay extra attention to uneven pavement, curbs, and other potential trip hazards such as leaves and fallen debris.
- ▶ Keep in mind, alcohol and certain medications can impair your decision-making skills and physical reflexes.



PEDESTRIAN SIGNS, SIGNALS, & MARKINGS



In this section, we will discuss different signs, signals, and markings that you see on the roadway when you are walking, driving, and biking. They can be found on local and state roads, and are designed and approved by the Federal Highway Administration to help improve pedestrian safety.

As a pedestrian, do not take for granted that you have the right-of-way or are protected by these devices without practicing the necessary safety precautions mentioned in this booklet.

FACT

A pedestrian is any person afoot.
Section 316.003, Florida Statutes.



Drivers and bicyclists are also required to obey the traffic control devices in this section. When approaching these devices on the roadway, they should always:

- ▶ Slow down.
- ▶ Scan the roadway and look for a pedestrian.
- ▶ Stop in advance of the crosswalk or stop bar when a pedestrian is crossing.

Learning how to use them properly not only as a pedestrian but also as a driver and bicyclist will help improve safety and reduce fatalities and serious injuries for pedestrians of all ages.



MARKED AND UNMARKED CROSSWALKS



Crosswalks serve a vital safety purpose to direct you to the safest place to cross the roadway. They also advise drivers and bicyclists to be on the lookout for pedestrians and be prepared to stop. Marked crosswalks have solid, parallel white lines and sometimes have cross bars to increase their visibility.

Not all crosswalks are marked. According to Florida law, every intersection should be considered a crosswalk whether or not there are painted lines. The unmarked crosswalk area would be from one sidewalk to another or from one end of the roadway to other.



TIP

Make sure traffic comes to a complete stop before entering the roadway. Even if the signal says it is safe to walk, check to make sure traffic is clear before entering the crosswalk.

Pedestrians: When you **see** a crosswalk, **do** the following:

- ▶ Activate or obey the pedestrian signal if one is present.
- ▶ Wait for traffic to clear.
- ▶ Safely cross the roadway.
- ▶ Practice these safe walking tips:
 - ▷ Look left, look right, and look left again.
 - ▷ Look over your shoulder if you are at an intersection.
 - ▷ Make eye contact with oncoming drivers. Do not assume they will stop for you.
 - ▷ Continue to scan the roadway as you cross.



MIDBLOCK PEDESTRIAN CROSSING



A midblock pedestrian crossing is a marked crosswalk located between two intersections. They offer convenient locations for you to safely cross in areas with less frequent intersection crossings.

Pedestrians: When you **see** a Midblock Pedestrian Crossing, **do** the following:

- ▶ Always cross within the marked crosswalk.
- ▶ If there is a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) present, activate the call button (learn more on pages 22-23).
- ▶ Look to make sure drivers and bicyclists are stopped before you begin to cross.
- ▶ Practice these safe walking tips:
 - ▷ Look left, look right, and look left again.
 - ▷ Make eye contact with oncoming drivers. Do not assume that they will stop for you.
 - ▷ Continue to scan the roadway as you cross.

IN-ROADWAY PEDESTRIAN CROSSING SIGN



The In-Roadway Pedestrian Crossing sign is designed to be placed on the centerline in advance of a midblock crosswalk to remind drivers they are required to stop for pedestrians who are waiting to cross or are crossing.

Q: Why is this sign placed in the center of the roadway where drivers can hit it?

A: The placement of the In-Roadway Pedestrian Crossing sign in the roadway or median in advance of the crosswalk provides a visual warning to drivers to slow down and be prepared to stop for pedestrians.

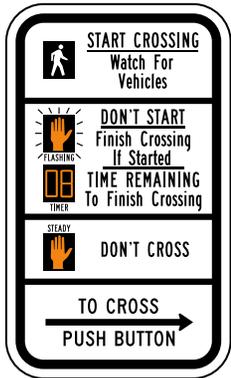
PEDESTRIAN COUNTDOWN SIGNALS



A Pedestrian Countdown Signal provides visual information on the number of seconds left to safely cross the roadway before the light changes and vehicles can enter the intersection. The countdown time is based on walking speed and crossing distance. For instance, an eight-lane roadway would have a longer countdown period than a four-lane roadway because of the longer distance to cross. The following safety information will help you properly use this pedestrian signal.

Pedestrians: When you **see** a Pedestrian Countdown Signal, **do** the following:

- ▶ Press the call button and wait until the Walk signal appears before entering the crosswalk.
- ▶ If the Flashing Hand signal appears when you are in the crosswalk, safely finish crossing.
- ▶ If the Flashing Hand signal appears before you enter the crosswalk, stop and wait for the next signal.



- ▶ The Countdown Timer begins when the Flashing Hand signal appears and ends with a zero and the Solid Hand signal appears.
- ▶ Never cross the roadway when a Solid Hand signal is displayed.

Q: When do I enter the crosswalk?

A: Only enter the crosswalk when the Walk signal is shown. Look left, look right, and look left again before entering the roadway.

Q: Why doesn't the pedestrian signal change as soon as I push the call button?

A: After you push the call button, the system is alerted that a pedestrian is present. However, it still needs to complete its cycle to allow drivers time to get through the intersection before you can safely enter the crosswalk.

Q: Sometimes the walk time is too short for me to finish crossing. What can I do?

A: Contact your local traffic engineering department to ask if timing adjustments can be made. If the roadway is maintained by the Florida Department of Transportation, they can refer you to the proper contact.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING SIGN



A Pedestrian Crossing sign identifies where a pedestrian crosswalk is located on the roadway.

Pedestrians: When you **see** a Pedestrian Crossing sign, **do** the following:

- ▶ Wait for traffic to clear. Look left, look right, and look left again before entering the roadway.
- ▶ Continue to scan the roadway as you cross.



PEDESTRIAN HYBRID BEACON (PHB)



A Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) is designed to help you safely cross busy or high-speed roadways at midblock crossings or, in some areas, at intersections. The signal consists of two red lights above a single yellow light. The signal remains dark until activated when you push the call button. When pushed, the signal will start a yellow to red sequence of steady and flashing lights to direct drivers to slow down and come to a complete stop. You will then receive a Walk signal and may begin to cross the roadway.

Pedestrians: When you **see** a PHB, **do** the following:

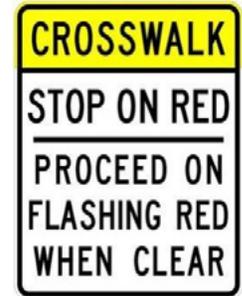
- ▶ Push the call button to activate the signals.
- ▶ Wait for the lights to flash before entering the crosswalk. Look left, look right, and look left again before entering the roadway.



- ▶ Verify drivers and bicyclists have come to a complete stop before you begin to cross.

Drivers and Bicyclists: When you **see** a PHB, **do** the following:

- ▶ Stop on red.
- ▶ Proceed on flashing red only when no pedestrians are in the crosswalk.



RECTANGULAR RAPID FLASHING BEACON (RRFB)



A Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) consists of two flashing rectangular yellow lights that are activated manually when you push the call button or, in some instances, have automated pedestrian detection. They can reduce crashes between drivers and pedestrians at unsignalized intersections and midblock crossings when used properly. An RRFB helps increase a driver's awareness of the crossing and the need to prepare to stop when the high-visibility, strobe-like warning lights have been activated by a pedestrian.

Pedestrians: When you **see** an RRFB **do** the following:

- ▶ Push the call button to activate the warning lights.
- ▶ Check that the lights are flashing.
- ▶ Look left, right, and left again to make sure traffic is stopped before entering the crosswalk.
- ▶ When crossing multiple lanes of traffic, stop in the center and make sure traffic is stopped before continuing to cross.

Drivers and Bicyclists: When you **see** an RRFB **do** the following:

- ▶ Slow down when you see the flashing lights.
- ▶ Look ahead for pedestrians.
- ▶ Stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- ▶ Wait until the pedestrian has safely crossed before proceeding.



STOP FOR PEDESTRIAN SIGN

The Stop for Pedestrian sign is intended for drivers. It is a regulatory sign meaning that the driver must stop for pedestrians currently in or entering the crosswalk. Drivers can be ticketed if they do not stop and allow a pedestrian to cross.



TURNING VEHICLES STOP FOR PEDESTRIAN SIGN

The Turning Vehicles Stop for Pedestrian sign notifies drivers who are making a right-hand turn that they must come to a complete stop for pedestrians before turning.



Drivers: When you **see** a Turning Vehicle Stop for Pedestrian sign, **do** the following:

- ▶ Look for pedestrians before turning.
- ▶ Stop for a pedestrian in the crosswalk.

To learn more about traffic control devices and the laws related to their use, download and read the “Traffic Controls” section of the [Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Official Florida Driver Handbook \(see page 30\).](#)

FLORIDA PEDESTRIAN LAWS



One of the most important ways to be safe when walking is to be predictable and follow the rules of the road. **Pedestrians** must do the following to comply with Florida law:

- ▶ Obey all traffic signals.
 - ▶ Only cross the roadway when directed by a Pedestrian Control signal.
 - ▶ Do not start to cross the roadway when facing a steady yellow light.
 - ▶ Proceed to cross the roadway within any marked or unmarked crosswalk when facing a steady green light.

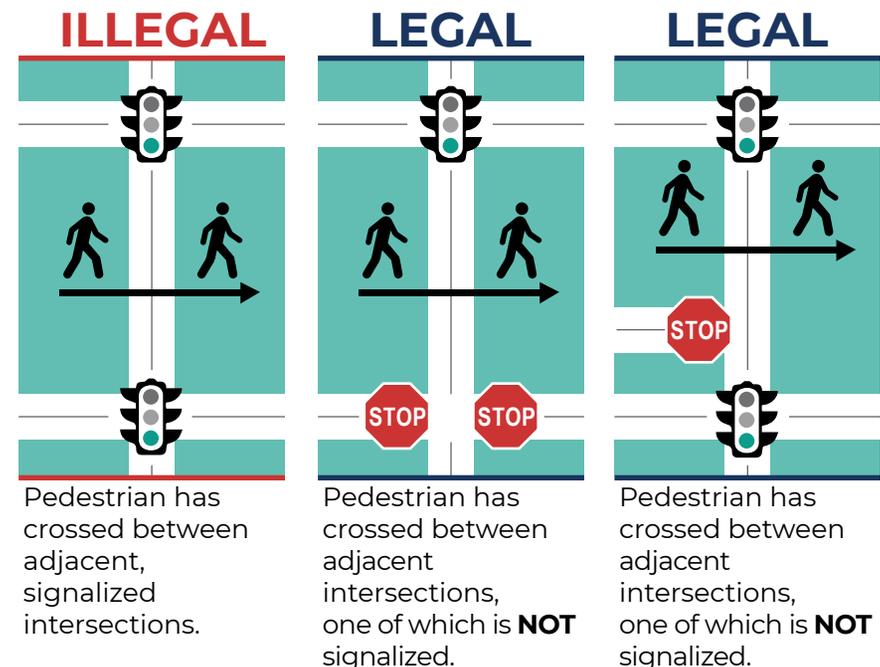


FACT

Pedestrians do not always have the right-of-way.



- ▶ Walk on the sidewalk when provided.
- ▶ When sidewalks are not provided, walk on the left side of the roadway facing oncoming traffic.
- ▶ Yield to oncoming drivers when crossing outside of a marked crosswalk or intersection.
- ▶ Except in a marked crosswalk, you may not cross between adjacent signalized intersections. See below for a visual description of safe places to cross midblock.



Roadway safety is a shared responsibility. It is equally important to learn the traffic safety laws that apply to drivers to improve pedestrian safety. According to Florida law, **drivers** shall do the following:

- ▶ Come to a complete stop before entering the crosswalk when facing a steady red light.
- ▶ Yield to pedestrians crossing before making a permitted right turn.
- ▶ When turning right or left facing a circular green light, yield the right-of-way to other vehicles and pedestrians lawfully within the intersection or crosswalk.
- ▶ No vehicle shall pass another vehicle stopped at any crosswalk to permit a pedestrian to cross a roadway.

The following Florida laws are in place to protect the pedestrian rights of the blind, visually impaired, and **mobility-impaired persons**:

- ▶ The White Cane Law requires all drivers to fully stop for any pedestrian on a public street or highway who is assisted by a guide dog or carrying a cane or walking stick. The cane or walking stick should be in a raised or extended position and be white in color or white tipped with red.
- ▶ Drivers must stop and yield the right-of-way to mobility-impaired pedestrians on a public street or highway who are assisted by a service animal, walker, crutch, orthopedic cane, or wheelchair.

- ▶ Mobility impaired pedestrians must use sidewalks but may leave the sidewalk and enter the roadway to avoid a potential conflict.



To stay up to date on pedestrian laws, download and read the latest version of the “Sharing the Road” section of the [Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Official Florida Driver Handbook \(see page 30\)](#).

We hope you found the information in this booklet useful to help you use walking to get around your community safely.



RESOURCES



Florida's Safe Mobility for Life Coalition:
[SafeMobilityFL.com](https://www.SafeMobilityFL.com)

Alert Today Florida:
[alerttodayflorida.com](https://www.alerttodayflorida.com)

AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit:
[aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2014/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html](https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/getting-around/info-2014/aarp-walk-audit-tool-kit.html)

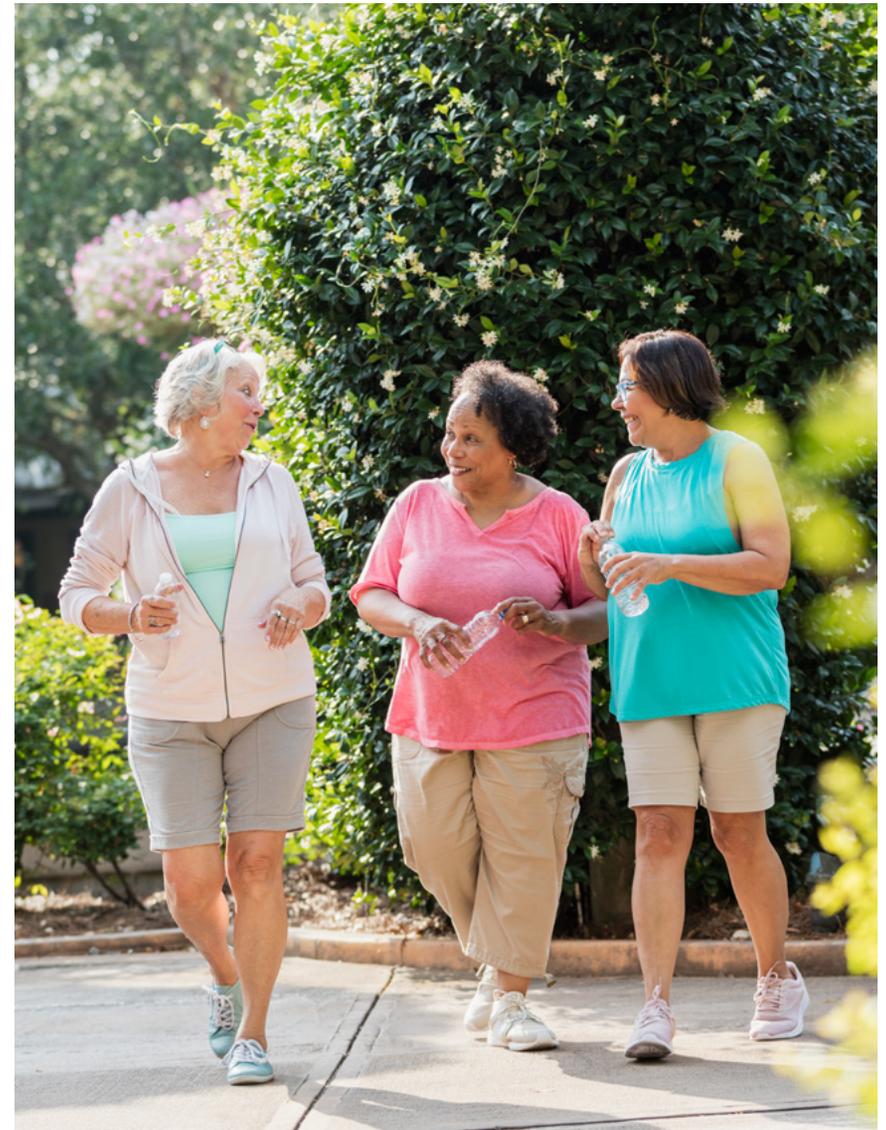
The Agency for Persons with Disabilities:
[apd.myflorida.com](https://www.apd.myflorida.com)

Best Foot Forward:
[iyield4peds.org/your-role/resources](https://www.iyield4peds.org/your-role/resources)

Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Official
Florida Driver License Handbook:
[flhsmv.gov/resources/handbooks-manuals](https://www.flhsmv.gov/resources/handbooks-manuals)

Florida Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Resource Center:
pedbikesrc.ce.ufl.edu/pedbike/default.asp

Florida Statutes:
leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES





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