

# Member Profile: Carol Patterson

## Walking Her Way to Better Health

Teaming up with co-workers is helping Carol stay motivated.

About a year ago, Carol Patterson would spend her lunch break walking along 125<sup>th</sup> Street from Park Avenue to the West Side and back, and she remembers how much of a lift she got from the midday workout. “Walking on my lunch hour made me feel better physically, but it also helped me mentally,” Carol said. “I found I was more energized after taking those walks.”

Like many of us who lead busy lives, Carol, who is an 1199SEIU delegate and a secretary at Beth Israel Hospital, gradually stopped walking at lunchtime. A few months ago, though, she realized it was time to start exercising again. During an April visit to her primary care doctor, she learned that her blood pressure and cholesterol levels were a little high. “The first thing my doctor said to me was I need to exercise more,” Carol said. “He told me if I exercise, I shouldn’t need any medication – which was all I needed to hear.”

Around the same time, she attended the National Benefit Fund’s Delegate Assembly training at the Sheraton in Manhattan. There, the delegates learned about the new telephonic health coaching programs to help 1199SEIU members lose weight or quit smoking and the disease-management programs that help members manage their diabetes and heart disease. The delegates also learned more about the Union, management and Fund’s Wellness initiative to promote a “culture of health” at the worksite, as well as tips for staying active – and Carol was inspired.

As a 54-year-old woman whose stepdaughter loves tennis, Carol said she always has a good example of healthy living right in front of her. Still, she knew that she’d need some support to stay committed to the lunchtime walking routine. So she recruited some of her co-workers to join her and started a walking group. When co-worker Ramon Maisonet heard Carol was interested in starting a walking group, he jumped on board immediately. Ramon, who is 58 years old and has been a counselor at Beth Israel Hospital for 10 years, said he lifts weights but pays too little attention to other heart-healthy exercises. “Carol sets a good example, so I’ve got my sneakers under the desk and I’m ready to go.” In May, the group of four to six men and women began walking in Central Park three days a week, and Carol said starting the group was the best idea she’s had in a while.

“I knew I needed to walk more,” she said. “And the group motivates me to keep it up. By adding regular exercise and changing my lifestyle, including eating better, I should be able to get my blood pressure and cholesterol down. I already know I feel much better!”



*Walking team members, from left to right: Ramon Maisonet, Carol Patterson and Michelle Joseph.*

### Do you have a healthy story to share?

We’re always looking for the opportunity to spotlight members who are taking positive steps to protect their health. If you would like to share your healthy story in an upcoming issue of *For Your Benefit*, please contact the Fund at [Communications@1199Funds.org](mailto:Communications@1199Funds.org).

## Walk Your Way to Better Health – Safely

If you're just starting a walking routine, you don't want to risk an injury that can sideline your workout. (Remember to check with your doctor before beginning any exercise routine.) Fortunately, with a little care and attention, you can stay injury-free. Try these tips:

- 1. Start out slowly.** If walking briskly is new for you, ease into it. Try a 10-minute walk and see how you feel the next day. A little soreness in your calves, upper legs or buttocks is normal, but if you feel any pain in your feet, ankles, knees or back, don't fight through it. Back off for a day or two, and make sure the pain goes away before your next walk.
- 2. Wear new socks.** One of the surest ways to get a blister on your foot is to exercise wearing worn-out socks. Always walk in clean socks made from cotton or a material that wicks away sweat and spare yourself painful blisters.
- 3. Wear well-fitting, supportive walking shoes.** You don't need to buy new shoes, but just be sure the ones you have give you the best support and cushioning. Wear shoes that are slightly stiff through the arch, and be sure your toes have wiggle room to avoid bunions and ingrown toenails. Your heel should sit snugly in the shoe, and the heel should be cushioned but not mushy.
- 4. Remember to breathe.** It's best to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, evenly. Count to three as you breathe in and again as you breathe out – it won't be long before you can increase the number to four or five as your lung capacity improves. Maintaining an even pace should also help you regulate your breathing.
- 5. Stretch after you walk.** Protect against muscle strains and soreness by stretching your leg and lower back muscles. Stretch for three to five minutes after your walk, and, again, start slowly.

It's always better to be safe than sorry and ease off your routine rather than have to stop altogether. Don't let an avoidable injury put the brakes on your healthy lifestyle!

Sources: [www.prevention.com](http://www.prevention.com); [www.about.com](http://www.about.com); [www.thewalkingsite.com](http://www.thewalkingsite.com); [www.sportsinjuryclinic.net](http://www.sportsinjuryclinic.net); [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)



“Walking on my lunch hour made me feel better physically, but it also helped me mentally.”