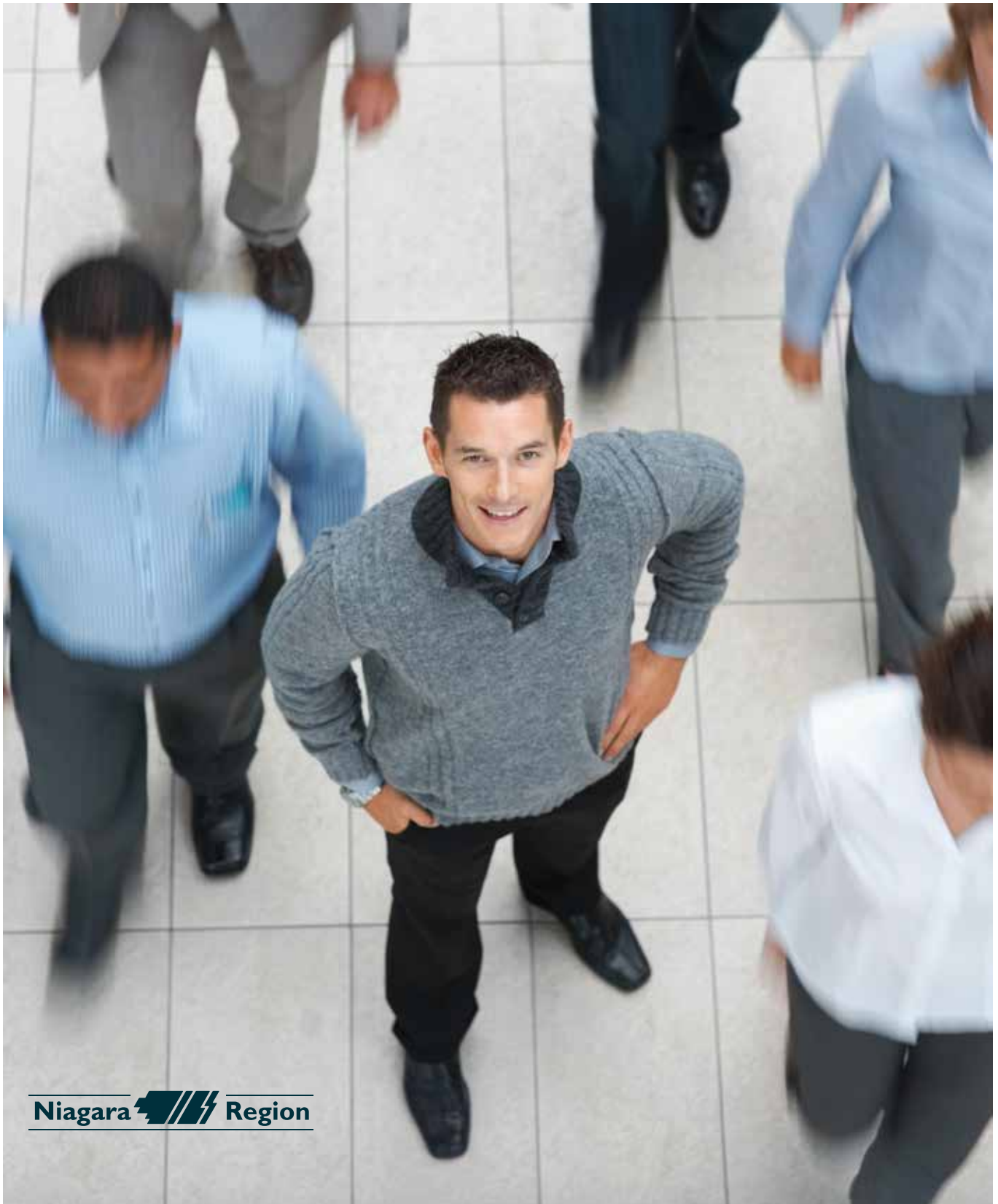


RESETTING THE PACE

Comprehensive Strategies to Promote Walking in the Workplace



For more information or consultation, please contact
Niagara Region Public Health at 905.688.3762 or
1.800.263.7248 ext. 7362.



Adapted with Permission from Region of Waterloo Public Health

1.0	INTRODUCTION	
	About this toolkit	6
	Comprehensive workplace health promotion	7
2.0	BACKGROUND	
	What is workplace walking?	10
	How much is enough?	11
	How much walking do we do?	12
	Energy expenditure on the job	13
	Effects of sedentary behaviour	15
	How sedentary are we?	16
	The benefits of getting up from your desk	18
	What is tying employees to their chairs?	19
3.0	GETTING STARTED	
	Step 1 Gain management and organizational support	25
	Step 2 Form a wellness committee	26
	Step 3a Assess needs and interests	29
	Step 3b Assemble a workplace walking subcommittee	32
	Step 4 Develop a workplace walking plan	33
	Step 5 Develop the evaluation plan	39
	Step 6 Check-in with management	41
	Step 7 Implement the plan	42
	Step 8 Evaluate and update the strategy	44
4.0	STRATEGIES	
	Strategies at a glance	48
4.1	AWARENESS RAISING	
	Bulletin boards and posters	52
	Displays and health fairs	52
	Emails, newsletters & other employee communications	53
	Events	55
	Health screening and health risk assessments	55
	Local walking opportunities	56
	Lunch and learns	57
	Mobile health technology	57
	Pamphlets and brochures	59
	Point-of-decision information	59

4.2	SKILL BUILDING	
	Challenges and contests	64
	Activity breaks	66
	Goal-setting and activity plans	67
	Health fairs	68
	Lunch and learns	68
	Self-monitoring tools	69
	Walking programs	71
4.3	SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS	
	Active work breaks	75
	Facilities	79
	Meetings, workshops and events	85
	Social support	91
4.4	POLICY DEVELOPMENT	97
	Build support for policy	100
	Policy considerations	102
	Frequently asked questions	105
	APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY	107

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to help workplace champions create a comprehensive plan to address walking while at work. It incorporates emerging research on the risks of prolonged sitting and the benefits of moving more frequently. A wide range of strategies to raise awareness, build skills, create supportive environments and develop policies are presented to assist workplaces in creating a comprehensive plan.

Prior to beginning any workplace health strategy, it is important that all key stakeholders in the workplace support the concept. Key stakeholders may include, but are not limited to, senior management, unions and employee associations, employees, occupational health and safety representatives, human resources and communications staff.

The Workplace Health Promoter from Niagara Region Public Health is available to provide free consultation to Niagara workplaces to individually discuss workplace health needs and how to take advantage of free resources.

For additional information on getting started or to request a consultation, please refer to the www.niagararegion.ca and search A-Z index for 'Workplace Health' or call 905.688.3762 ext. 7362.



HELPFUL TOOLS: Glossary

A glossary is located at the back of this toolkit (Appendix A) and is intended to explain a number of terms used in this resource.

COMPREHENSIVE WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION

There are three critical areas in workplaces that influence employee health and health behaviours.

Occupational Health and Safety

The first area includes health and safety initiatives. Occupational health and safety is designed to protect employees from physical harm or exposure to harmful substances with the goal of reducing work related injury, illness and disability. While occupational health and safety initiatives are important, on their own, these initiatives are not enough to create a healthy work environment.

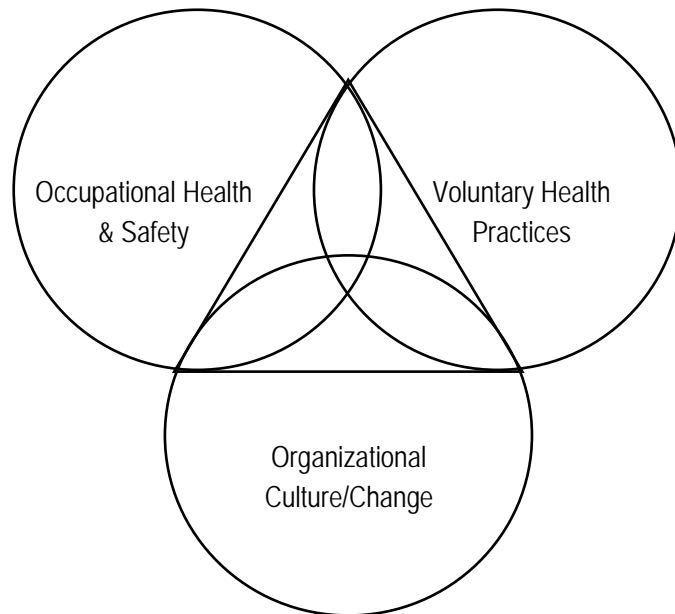
Voluntary Health Practices

The second area is voluntary health practices. Voluntary health practices may include areas such as the promotion of physical activity at work, on-site healthy eating choices and smoke-free living. Workplace health promotion strategies often focus on changing voluntary health practices of individuals by running educational and skill building programs. The programs are often targeted at individual behaviour. While workplace health promotion strategies are important, these practices are not considered to be as effective compared to strategies that also target organizational factors that impact personal health practices.

Organizational Health

When planning workplace health promotion efforts, it is important to consider the workplace environment or organizational culture in conjunction with voluntary health promotion activities.

A supportive organizational culture is a workplace that promotes both physical and mental health, and well-being. Small improvements within the workplace can improve the health outcomes of employees. Some examples include enhancing social support, ensuring positive communication strategies and a fair management style.



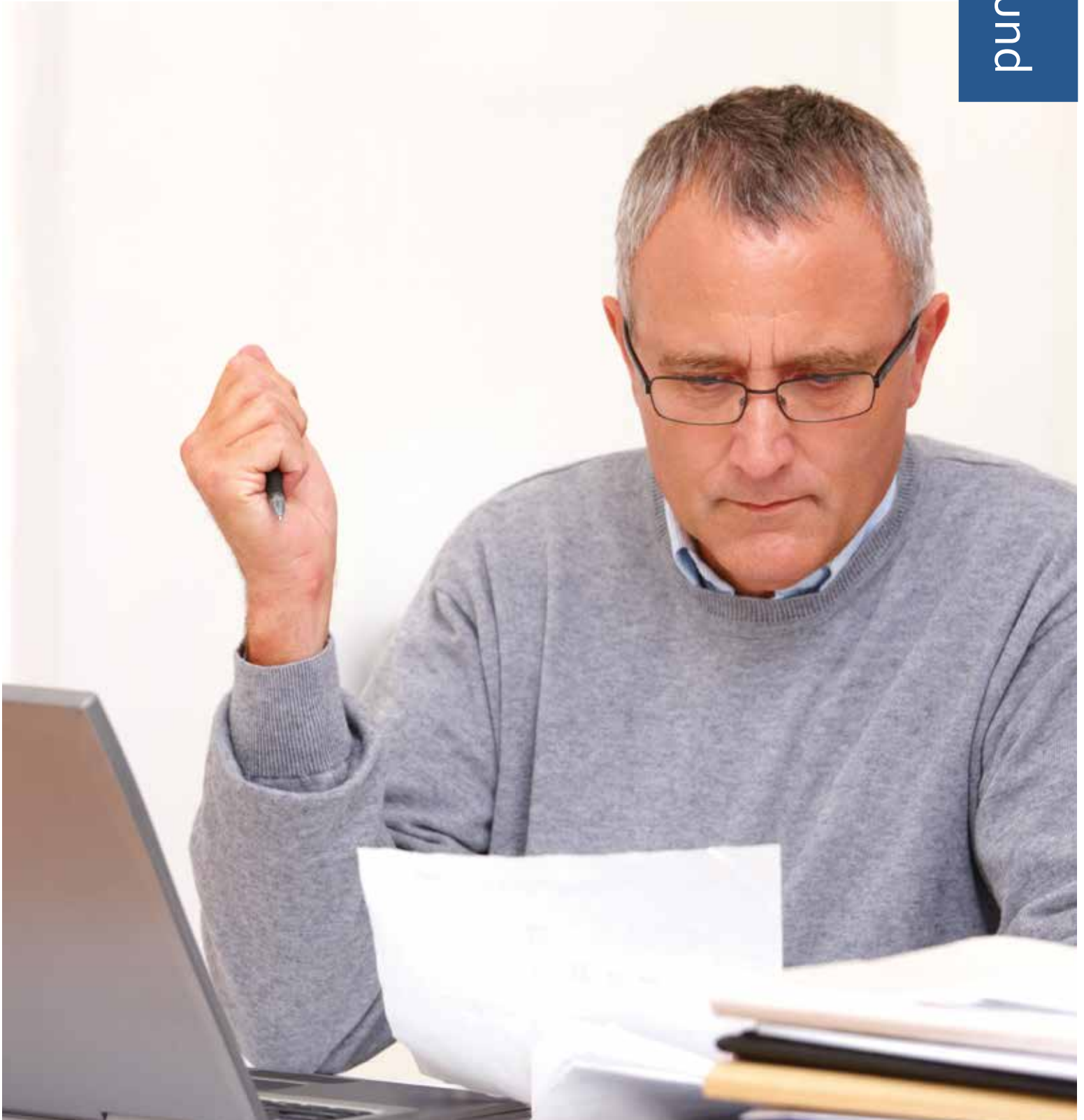
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BACKGROUND

Understanding the Issues



WHAT IS WORKPLACE WALKING?

Walking could be the single, most effective, cost-efficient intervention workplaces can offer their employees.¹

Workplace walking represents each and every step employees take throughout the workday, including brief walks to the printer or washroom, as well as longer stretches of walking on breaks and lunches. Workplace walking can also include the steps employees take getting from home to work and back again. Steps are accumulated whether they walk to and from the car, to public transit or walk the entire distance between home and work.

Some employees may have jobs that require them to take steps as part of normal work assignments (e.g. mail carrier, assembly line worker), while others may have more sedentary positions that offer limited opportunities to leave their workstation.

Every workplace is unique and individual employees will have a different set of circumstances either creating opportunities to get up for walks or remain sedentary for the majority of the workday. It is for this reason that it becomes important to implement occasions to get employees moving.



HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, released in January 2011, recommend adults 18 – 64 years of age to **“accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more”** to achieve health benefits. In addition, the guidelines also recommend incorporating muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least two days each week.²

These recommendations are the **minimum** amount of physical activity needed weekly to achieve health benefits. More physical activity will provide even greater health benefits.³

However, for those who are physically inactive, the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines acknowledge that doing less than 150 minutes per week can provide some health benefits. For these adults, the guidelines recommend starting with smaller amounts of physical activity and gradually increasing the duration, frequency and intensity in an effort to work toward meeting the suggested minimum of 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per week.⁴

Studies have found that walking at a moderate intensity equates to approximately 100 steps per minute, or 1,000 steps in a 10 minute period or 3,000 steps over 30 minutes of walking.⁵ It is important to note that like the physical activity guidelines above, these are simply a guide, not a prescription and are over and above steps taken as part of normal daily activities. When combined with habitual and incidental daily activities, adults should take a minimum of 7,000-8,000 steps per day. Once again, this is a minimum recommendation – more physical activity is better.⁵

Moderate-intensity physical activity will cause adults to sweat a little more and to breathe harder. Vigorous-intensity physical activity will cause adults to sweat and be ‘out-of-breath’.⁶



HOW MUCH WALKING DO WE DO?

A 2009 survey found that slightly more than half of Canadian adults (52.5 per cent) self-reported that they were at least moderately active during their leisure time.⁷ In this study, moderate activity was defined as the equivalent to walking a minimum of 30 minutes per day or participating in a one-hour exercise class three times per week. However, a recent study that measured actual physical activity using an accelerometer estimated that only 15 per cent of Canadian adults accumulate the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (MVPA) per week.⁸

In the same Canadian study, men averaged 9,500 steps per day and women 8,400 steps. Approximately 35 per cent of adults accumulated an average of 10,000 steps per day. Obese men and women accumulated significantly fewer steps per day than adults of a healthy weight.⁹ However, only 30 per cent reported walking on a regular basis. Women, older adults, and adults who report a lower household income report walking more often than men, individuals with a higher income status and those individuals who are considered overweight or obese.⁹

Walking has become a popular activity for Canadians regardless of age, sex, weight or income. It is a natural movement for most individuals and does not require special equipment or membership fees. Walking can be used as a mode of transportation and can be done almost anywhere. Approximately 70 per cent of Canadian adults have reported walking as a form of physical activity at least once in a three month period.

In 2005, Canadian adults with a healthy body weight were more likely to spend more than six hours per week using modes of active transportation such as walking to work, to school or for errands. Women and younger people are more likely to walk for shorter durations (0 to 5 hours per week) to work, school or for errands.¹⁰

Walking in the Niagara Region

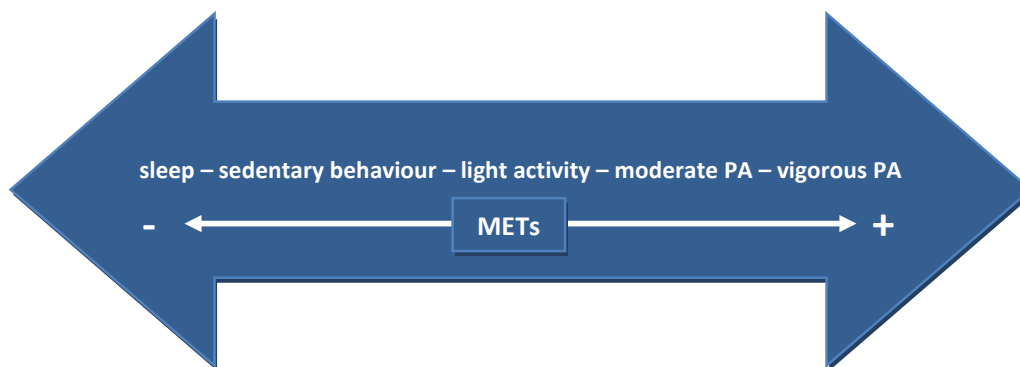
A 2011 self-reported study on the importance of walking by Niagara region residents 18 years of age and older found that 57 per cent consider walking distance from home to their workplace as an important factor when making decisions about where to live. In this same study, approximately 66 per cent of adults consider walking distance from home to public transportation as an important factor when making the decision on where to live.

ENERGY EXPENDITURE ON THE JOB

With the many technological advances within the workplace, we have begun to engineer physical activity out of the workday. Automation on assembly lines and computer workstations has become the norm. As a result of these many technologies, employees are finding less opportunity to move throughout the workday. With the explosion of labour-saving devices within the home and the increasing popularity of screen-based leisure activities, sedentary behaviours are becoming more prevalent in the workplace and beyond. The phrase “modern chair dependency” is just one of the many terms reflecting the growing trend of sedentary-based activities.¹¹ This chair dependency contributes to cardiovascular disease, excess weight, premature death, and negative psychological and social effects as well.

Traditionally, physical activity literature has focused on the quantity of time people spent engaged in physical activity at moderate- to vigorous- intensity levels. As a result of this predominant focus on physical activity intensity, individuals who participated in light activity were still considered sedentary. Light physical activity can account for a large portion of the weekly amounts of physical activity, providing it is done in bouts of 10 minutes or more.¹³

Figure 1: Activity Continuum¹²



One *metabolic equivalent of task* (MET) is the amount of energy someone expends when at rest (i.e. sleeping). As activity increases so does the amount of energy (METs) expended (Figure 1).¹⁵ Sedentary behaviours are those that involve “any waking activity characterized by an energy expenditure ≤ 1.5 METs and a sitting or reclining posture.”¹³ Table 1 provides a summary of these increases and examples of jobs that often involve the different activity intensities.

Table 1: Metabolic Equivalents of Task (MET), Activities and Selected Job Types^{15, 14}

Intensity/METs		Sample Activities	Occupations*
Vigorous	26.0 METs	Running (>4km/hr) Weight lifting Swimming Dancing	Firefighter Truck driver (loading / unloading) Road crew (digging, jack hammering, driving heavy machinery)
Moderate	3.0 – 6.0 METs	Brisk walking (>3km/hr) Vacuuming Moving furniture/ organizing room Painting Gardening	Garbage collector Custodian (vacuuming, mopping) Hotel housekeeper Roofer Yard worker / lawn keeper Painter
Light	1.5 – 3.0 METs	Standing and talking Sitting and eating Washing dishes Shopping Child care (feeding, dressing, bathing) Playing musical instruments (sitting) Showering Slow walking (≤3km/hr)	Road crew (standing, directing traffic) Cook, chef Mail carrier Custodian (dusting, light cleaning) Taxi/ bus driver, delivery driver Operating automated, heavy equipment (not driving) Crane operator
Sedentary	1.0 METs	Working at a computer Watching television Sitting and reading	Police (directing traffic/ driving car) Store clerk Welder Police (riding in car) Office work (sitting tasks, meetings, light) Data entry (typing, computer)

*For specific METs and additional activities or occupations, please refer to the *Compendium of Physical Activities*
<https://sites.google.com/site/compendiumofphysicalactivities/Activity-Categories>

The amount of time a person is engaged in sedentary activities displaces time spent in higher intensity activity. This contributes to a decrease in overall energy expended through physical activity.¹⁵

EFFECTS OF SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

Sedentary behaviours occur in three areas throughout the day¹⁷

- Sitting at work
- Sitting during travel
- Sitting during leisure time

What Happens Physiologically?

The research suggests that sedentary behaviours may be a distinct risk factor, independent of physical activity, for many negative health outcomes in adults including an imbalance between bone loss and bone formation leading to a decreased bone mineral content.¹⁶

Other physiological effects of sedentary behaviour may also include a decrease in muscle activity resulting in a reduction of fatty acids that are absorbed by muscle and fat tissue. This results in increased triglyceride levels and decreased high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol in the blood. Muscles also become less sensitive to insulin resulting in increased blood sugars.^{17,18}

When these physiological changes occur, the risk for a variety of chronic diseases increases including the risk for:

- Premature death^{19,25}
- Diabetes^{20,21}
- Osteoporosis¹⁵
- Heart disease^{22,22}
- High blood pressure^{15,23}
- Obesity^{15,24,26,24,25}
- Cancer^{25,26}

Women appear to be at greater risk for premature death than men. One study found that women who sat for more than six hours a day had a 37 per cent increased risk of premature death, compared to 18 per cent for men. This risk remained when factors such as diet, amount of physical activity and smoking were controlled.²⁷



HOW SEDENTARY ARE WE?

Research suggests that adults report sitting on average more than five hours per day.²⁸

According to data collected in the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS), sedentary behaviours accounted for 69 per cent of the time adults wore an accelerometer during waking hours. The total average daily sedentary time was 9.6 hours for men and 9.8 hours for women.⁹

Sedentary behaviour at work is not uncommon. One study indicated that adults spent 70 per cent of waking hours in sedentary behaviours on workdays compared to 62 per cent on non-work days.²⁹

Effects on the Workplace

Sedentary behaviour and physical inactivity also effects workplace productivity. Employees who sit more frequently while at work have a two per cent productivity loss and a decrease in time management skills than those adults who sit for less time at the workplace.³⁰ Employees have identified that prolonged sitting at work creates feelings of mental and physical exhaustion, sluggishness, depression and social isolation. These feelings contribute to low productivity, poor work performance and disengagement with day-to-day workplace tasks.³¹



Sitting On the Job

A 2011 Ipsos Public Affairs poll ³² found that full-time employees of large U.S. companies (1,000 or more workers) spend more than two-thirds of their working hours sitting. These employees reported:

- More than 21 hours per week sitting at a desk
- Almost three hours per week sitting in meetings
- More than four hours per week sitting doing work at home

Other studies have estimated that sitting at work accounts for one-third to one-half of total sitting time. ^{33, 34} One study showed an even higher proportion with three-quarters of the work day spent sedentary for employees in office-based retail and call centre workplace settings.³⁶

Those who report higher amounts of sitting at work include:

- Professionals^{36,37}
- Managers ^{36,37}
- Administrative workers^{36,37}

An Australian study of working-aged women³⁵ found that sitting time was highest for women:

- Working full-time
- Working in skilled occupations
- Who spent the most time doing passive leisure time activities

People who spend long periods sitting at work may be more likely to adopt sedentary activities in their leisure time.^{36,37} In fact, middle-aged Australian women tended to sit less if they were also engaged in a number of other healthy behaviours (i.e., moderate/high physical activity, non-smoking, non-drinking).³⁸



MOVING FORWARD: The Bottom Line

Prolonged, unbroken time spent sitting is common in many workplaces, across all staff levels (i.e., front line staff, supervisors, management, etc.). Technological advancements have contributed to an increased amount of time spent sitting. Individual employees will have a different set of factors that contribute to the amount of sitting that they do each day. Addressing the issue at an organizational level can benefit everyone.

THE BENEFITS OF GETTING UP FROM YOUR DESK

Moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking, provides many health benefits. Participation in 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week is associated with a 30 per cent decrease in the risk for premature death, cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, colon cancer, breast cancer and type II diabetes.³ Greater health benefits can be achieved by being increasing the amount or intensity of physical activity.³

Three short periods of brisk walking in bouts of 10 minutes or more accumulated throughout the day is as effective as one continuous 30 minute brisk walk in reducing cardiovascular risk and improving mood in people who were previously sedentary.³⁶ It is important to note, that activity spent in leisure time could be offset by the degree of sedentary behaviour during the remainder of waking hours.²⁹ Therefore, it is suggested that sedentary time is broken up by brief bouts of physical activity. Breaking up sedentary activities can include simple stretching, moving from a sitting to standing position, or from standing still to a light walk. These activities lessen the health risks associated with sedentary behaviour.⁴¹

Possible health benefits associated with reduced sedentary behaviour include:

- Lower blood sugar^{37, 38}
- Smaller waist circumference⁴¹
- Lower body mass index (BMI)⁴¹
- Lower triglyceride levels⁴¹
- Lower risk for developing cancer²⁹
- Improvements in self-esteem³⁹
- Decreased feelings of stress and depression⁴⁴
- Improved perception of personal health status⁴⁴



WHAT IS TYING EMPLOYEES TO THEIR CHAIRS?

Many employees that have sedentary positions in the workplace do not enjoy spending increased time being seated at work.³² When employees were surveyed to determine what is preventing them from moving about during the workday, many employees cited that getting up more frequently would cause a loss of productivity and focus, especially when working on projects that require a high level of concentration.²⁹ These employees also reported that being away from the desk invites negative responses from managers and supervisors who perceive that the individual is not working to full capacity.²⁹

In this particular study, government employees in Australia believed that the workplace culture identified sitting at a desk to an increase in productivity. This same group of employees also identified barriers to being more active at work including locked stairwells for increased security, printers and recycling bins located close to or at individual desks and a lack of supportive facilities to promote active transportation*.²⁹

**-The definition for active transportation can be found in glossary.*



MOVING FORWARD: The Bottom Line

Physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours are emerging as two different health risks. Employers need to look at workplace walking as purposeful periods of time spent walking. Walking can be done in bouts of 10 minutes throughout the work day. This is beneficial to both the employee and the employer.



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GETTING STARTED

Planning a Workplace Walking Strategy



CREATING AN EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSIVE WORKPLACE WALKING STRATEGY

There is no single correct approach to implement a comprehensive workplace walking strategy. The workplace health promotion literature suggests eight steps that assist in making strategies successful.¹ This section outlines these steps, which in practice may not always occur in the order presented.



STEP 1 – GAIN MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

When working to create a healthy workplace environment, it is important for all levels within the organization to be working towards a common goal. Senior management support is important in making any organizational change.^{2,3,4}

Obtaining this support is crucial to generate resources such as employee time and funding to initiate and maintain successful wellness programs.^{5,6} Additionally, senior managers must be prepared to see the process through to the end.^{3,7} Without this commitment, successful implementation of any wellness initiative is significantly reduced.

Ideally, all levels of the organization should be engaged in the wellness approach to make the strategy a success.⁸ If some members of the organization are not supportive of a workplace walking strategy, it may be worthwhile to invest some time to create buy-in to ensure success.

Creating Buy-in

It is important that all key decision-makers understand the benefits of a workplace walking strategy for the organization and employees.⁹ Creating a business case may be time well spent. This presentation should align the benefits of a workplace walking strategy with the organizational priorities, mission and values.⁸ If available, include relevant information from previous employee interest surveys that indicate physical activity or workplace walking as a priority for staff.



MOVING FORWARD: The Role of Management in Increasing Employee Acceptance

It is possible that employees may be skeptical around some aspects of a workplace walking strategy.

Managers play a critical role in organizational change so obtaining adequate representation from this group is important. When senior management's commitment and involvement is visible, employees are more likely to commit to and participate in creating a healthy workplace.⁷ Management should promote the physical and psychological health benefits of walking to employees.

STEP 2 – FORM A WELLNESS COMMITTEE

A committee approach is helpful to exchange ideas between employees, union members, wellness staff and management.⁵ Successful workplace health initiatives often indicate that program acceptance was achieved using a committee approach.^{4,7,10,11,12} By involving all relevant stakeholders in a workplace walking strategy, all perspectives are considered.


The Wellness Committee can conduct a health or interest survey to get an overall understanding of current workplace issues related to physical activity. Based on this assessment, the Wellness Committee can create an overall wellness plan and specific work plan to address the needs of the employees.

Engaging Employees

There are several levels of employee engagement in a Wellness Committee. Employees can participate in consultation, decision making and implementation of a workplace walking strategy.³ Ideally, employees should have a significant role in the decision-making process so that a walking program is utilized amongst staff.² It is important to include union groups so that potential concerns are addressed in advance of the implementation stage. Employee involvement should happen early and often in the process.^{3,8,13}

Consider creating a *Terms of Reference* for the committee to outline the responsibilities of all key stakeholders of the workplace walking strategy. Employees should know what decisions they will be able to influence as a Wellness Committee. For example, management may have already made the decision that *there* will be changes. In this case, the Wellness Committee might be asked to make decisions related to: what changes will be made, how the changes are made, where to start the process and how long the process should take.

Figure 1 provides a sample Terms of Reference to guide you

 **WORKPLACE EXAMPLES: Wellness Committee Terms of Reference**

Ontario Healthy Workplace Coalition
http://www.thcu.ca/workplace/pubs/2008_02_22_terms_of_reference.pdf

Act Now BC
http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/recreation_parks/documents/ACTIVE_WORKPLACE_web.pdf (page 21)

York Region
<http://www.york.ca/NR/rdonlyres/>

Figure 1 - Sample Wellness Committee Terms of Reference

“Committee Name” Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Committee

The purpose of the “committee name” is to develop, implement, evaluate and sustain a comprehensive health promotion strategy in the workplace. The intent is to make the healthy choice, the easy choice and ensure that workplace practices are consistent with the healthy living messages promoted in the workplace. The “committee name” will be responsible for leading the process to create a comprehensive health promotion strategy in our workplace. For example, the committee will:

- Develop the terms of reference
- Complete a workplace walking/physical activity needs and interest assessment
- Set priorities for action
- Develop a plan to address identified areas of concern
- Carry out the duties outlined in the plan
- Manage resources (time, budget)
- Evaluate initiatives
- Communicate with workplace employees and managers about the committee activities

Membership

The Committee will consist of “number of members” members and will include representatives from: management, unions/employee associations, employees, health and safety staff, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

The Chair of the “committee name” will be determined by (e.g., rotating through all members, designated chair each year, etc.). The Chair will be responsible for: calling for agenda items, preparing the agenda for meetings; ensuring quorum is achieved; and guiding committee members to work toward a common goal.

Recorder

Decide how the recorder will be chosen (e.g., volunteer at each meeting, rotating recorder, designated recorder etc.). The recorder will take minutes of each meeting and give to the chair for distribution within “number of days” days of the meeting. The recorder will also capture all “action” items so that these can be brought forward in future meetings.

Members

Members of the “committee name” will:

- Attend meetings
- Conduct discussions in a professional manner (e.g., constructively dealing with conflict)
- Complete tasks as assigned

Decision-making

When making decisions, the “name of committee” will strive for consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved after a reasonable length of time, decisions will be made by (e.g., majority vote, designated decision-maker such as a senior manager, etc.).

Meetings

Meetings will be held on the “designated day” of each month or at the call of the Chair. There will be a minimum of “number of” meetings per year.

Figure 1 - Sample Wellness Committee Terms of Reference

Agenda and Minutes

Have an agenda for each meeting using a standard format, to guide the committee on what is to be accomplished during the Wellness Committee meetings.

Keep minutes to record the committee discussions and action items for follow up. It is important to post the minutes so committee planning and discussions are transparent. If a standardized organizational template does not exist, Wellness Committees may want to use the following template to record minutes as found in figure 2.

Figure 2 – Sample Minutes Template

Name of Committee: _____

Meeting date _____

Participants: _____

Regrets: _____

Chair: _____ Recorder: _____

Company logo or
wellness brand
here

Agenda Item	Discussion Points	Decisions	Action (who will complete the action and when will it occur)
1.0 Welcome and Introductions			
2.0 Review and Additions to Agenda			
3.0 Review of Minutes of Previous Meeting			
4.0 Business Arising from the Minutes			
5.0 New Business			

Date, time and location of next meeting: _____

STEP 3A – ASSESS NEEDS AND INTERESTS

Understanding the needs and interests of employees is an essential part of developing a comprehensive workplace health program.

Before proceeding with a physical activity or walking initiative, conduct a general health needs assessment to determine the health priorities and interests of staff.^{4,7} The results of this assessment are critical to determine readiness for change and will guide decisions in subsequent phases of the workplace wellness program.

To learn more about employees interests, the Wellness Committee should perform a health needs assessment. This information will guide activities and assist in the creation of a supportive work environment. Methods for assessing employee priorities include discussions, suggestion boxes, focus groups and/ or surveys. Other sources of information such as absenteeism, productivity, disability claims and benefit costs may also identify whether physical activity and/ or sedentary behaviours are an issue for the workplace.¹⁴ The answers provided in a health needs assessment will depend on what questions are asked. It is important to respect employee confidentiality, so avoid questions that identify unique characteristics about an individual. Consider how information will be used. Figure 3a on the following page provides an overview of some questions that the Wellness Committee can present to employees on barriers to physical activity.

It is possible that employees will have health concerns unrelated to physical activity and/or walking. Some workplaces may be prepared for changes in one topic area (e.g., tobacco cessation) without being equally ready for changes in other areas.¹⁵ In this situation, wellness efforts should focus on the main priorities identified by staff and management. Physical activity may be a secondary priority to address in the future.



HELP IS AVAILABLE:

Niagara Region Public Health offers free consultation for workplaces on how to get started in workplace health promotion. For more information on how to establish a Wellness Committee or identify employee priorities and health needs, visit <http://www.niagararegion.ca> and search “workplace health”.

Needs Assessment Questions for Wellness Committees on Workplace Walking

Figures 3a and 3b below provides sample questions that Wellness Committees can use to guide the development of a needs assessment for the workplace. These lists are not exhaustive but will identify some barriers to physical activity and indicate interest levels on other health topics.

Figure 3a – Needs Assessment Questions – Identifying Barriers

<p>Identifying Barriers to Physical Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> What challenges do you face in being active? (Open-ended)<input type="checkbox"/> What changes can we make to the workplace to help you be able to get up and move around more? (Open-ended) <p>Workplace Related Barriers to Workplace Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Not enough time during the work day to take a break or get up and move around<input type="checkbox"/> Not enough places to walk at work<input type="checkbox"/> Workplace neighbourhood and building is not safe to walk<input type="checkbox"/> Work environment is not appealing to move around (e.g., too noisy, too cluttered, etc.)<input type="checkbox"/> Stairs are inconvenient<input type="checkbox"/> Do not know how to begin being active during the workday<input type="checkbox"/> Work related stress makes it difficult to get motivated to be active<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of support from colleagues<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of support from manager or supervisor<input type="checkbox"/> Spend most of the day in meetings<input type="checkbox"/> Job requires sitting or standing in one location for extended periods of time<input type="checkbox"/> Shift work<input type="checkbox"/> No place to change into or out of clothes for walking <p>Barriers to Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Being active is too expensive<input type="checkbox"/> Stress related to home/personal issues makes it hard for me to be active<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty resisting sedentary behaviours at home (e.g., television, computer, etc.)<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of support from family members<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of support from friends<input type="checkbox"/> Not enough time to go for a walk<input type="checkbox"/> Family or personal commitments<input type="checkbox"/> Shift work<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure what to do or how to begin<input type="checkbox"/> Too tired<input type="checkbox"/> Neighbourhood is unsafe and/or unpleasant<input type="checkbox"/> Weather

Figure 3b – Needs Assessment Questions – Employee Interests

I am interested in:

- ☐ Learning about how to walk more during the workday
- ☐ Learning about where I can walk safely outside the building
- ☐ Learning about where I can walk safely inside the building
- ☐ Learning about how set a goal and make a plan to walk at work
- ☐ Learning about how to stay motivated with a walking program
- ☐ Being able to track my progress
- ☐ Receiving regular reminders to get up from my desk
- ☐ Having a walking buddy
- ☐ Joining a walking group at break or lunch time
- ☐ Participating in a workplace walking challenge
- ☐ Joining a workplace team for a fundraising event (e.g., Terry Fox Run)
- ☐ Learning more about _____ (open-ended)
- ☐ Having these activities at work _____ (open-ended)

Interest in Health Risk Assessments (HRAs)

I would like to have a health screening for the following:

- ☐ Cholesterol
- ☐ Triglycerides
- ☐ Blood pressure
- ☐ Blood glucose (blood sugar)
- ☐ Body Mass Index
- ☐ Waist Circumference
- ☐ Physical activity readiness
- ☐ Fitness level



AVAILABLE TOOLS: Niagara Region Public Health Can Help!

Niagara Region Public Health can assist you in building a business case for physical activity, participate in lunch and learn events, provide physical activity tool kits and develop wellness programming. Contact us at 905.688.3762 ext. 7362 or visit <http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health> and search “workplace health consultation”.

STEP 3B – ASSEMBLE A WORKPLACE WALKING SUB-COMMITTEE

Once physical activity or walking has been identified as a priority amongst employees through the health needs assessment, consider creating a physical activity sub-committee. The group may wish to develop a terms of reference for this sub-committee, although it is not necessary. Actionable items should be recorded so that management and the larger Wellness Committee can be kept informed of progress.

Who to Involve

Consider involving representatives from the following groups when establishing the Walking Sub-Committee:

- Management/supervisory staff
- Health and safety committee members
- Wellness committee members
- Human resources
- Employees
- Unions and employee associations
- Fundraising and social committee members
- Training and development staff
- Marketing and communications staff
- Workplace health champions
- Other relevant workplace stakeholders



TIP: Walking Champions

Consider inviting 'walking champions' to be a part of your committee. A walking champion is an employee that is passionate and dedicated to walking. These individuals can communicate information to co-workers, listen effectively and seek feedback from their peers.¹³ Having champions on the committee will create buy-in among staff about walking initiatives.

STEP 4 – DEVELOP A WALKING PROGRAM PLAN

The Wellness Committee should use the information collected during the health needs assessment to prioritize a work plan for the year. The details of the plan will determine the likelihood of success.

The plan should:

- Identify activities or events that will take place as part of the program
- Detail primary tasks and specific actions that contribute to the activity
- Specify when the activities will happen
- Identify the direct output of the activity
- Establish the outcomes of the activity or set of activities
- Identify required resources

Plans should address the impact of occupational health and safety, voluntary health practices and organizational culture which all influence the priority for the comprehensive workplace walking strategy. Refer to Section 1.0 “Overview of Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion”.

Use information collected from Step 3a to assist in developing priority areas to develop the workplace action plan.

When prioritizing actions consider:

- Ease of implementing solutions including a “quick win” that may motivate and encourage continued progress
- Profiling specific activities to groups of employees
- Subjective opinions and preferences of workplace stakeholders, including managers, employees and union representatives¹⁶
- Strategies to reinforce behaviours at home¹⁷
- Costs that will be incurred if no action is taken

Put Together a Comprehensive Workplace Walking Program Plan

A comprehensive health promotion program includes awareness raising, skill building, supportive environments and policy development. These four approaches build upon one another and assist in the successful development of any wellness program.

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising activities provide information to employees about the benefits of walking, especially during the workday. Examples of awareness raising activities include the provision of information in newsletters, articles on the company intranet, postings on bulletin boards throughout the office and distribution of pamphlets.

Skill Building

Skill building activities provide employees with the opportunity to learn skills that will assist them in developing healthier behaviours and encourage them to walk more. Examples may include educational information sessions on how to remove barriers or develop personal physical activity goals. Other skill building activities include demonstrations by Niagara Region Public Health Physical Activity Advisors on how to develop a new skill such as using urban poles or snowshoes.

Supportive Environment

A supportive environment promotes workplaces to create sustainable, ongoing activities that assist employees to be more physically active throughout the work day. With a supportive workplace environment, there are reduced barriers in the workplace around physical activity. Work environments that are supportive of physical activity would offer such things such as on-site showers, secure bicycle storage, and walking groups during breaks.

Policy Development

Workplace policies provide clear definitions of expected employee behaviour at the workplace. A policy outlines the roles and responsibilities for staff and management. A policy for physical activity in the workplace will assist the employee to make a healthy choice the easy choice. An example of a workplace policy that is supportive of physical activity would be the incorporation of physical activity breaks for every 90 minutes of meeting time to allow an individual to get up and stretch.

Create Goals and Objectives

The process of implementing a workplace walking strategy can be tracked using goals and objectives. Goal setting is a popular tool for individuals trying to make a change in behaviour. Success has been achieved by individuals who have set goals and objectives for becoming more physically active.

Goals are broad, long-term accomplishments expected from the program. Objectives are shorter-term, measurable steps that provide direction on how an individual will work towards achieving the goal.

Each goal should have one or more objectives identified that will support its accomplishment. An individual will likely become more active if there is the belief that the activity will benefit them personally. Not every person has the same reasons for becoming active. The acronym S.M.A.R.T. is often used when setting objectives.

S = Specific	<i>What is it that is going to be done?</i>
M = Measurable	<i>How much and how often will it be done?</i>
A = Attainable	<i>How will it be done?</i>
R = Realistic	<i>Can it be done?</i>
T = Timely	<i>When will it be done?</i>



TIP: Example Goals and Objectives to Include a Walking Break during Meetings

Goal: To create an environment that promotes walking at work.

Objectives:

Specific: What do you want to do?

Example: Create a policy that ensures employees have a stretch break during meetings that are longer than two hours in duration.

Measurable: How much and how often will it be done?

Example: In every meeting longer than two hours in duration.

Attainable: How will it be done?

Example: A break for employees to stretch will be included as an agenda item for meetings two hours in length.

Realistic: Will employees be able to follow the policy?

Example: A standardized meeting agenda template will include stretch breaks.

Timely: When will it be done?

Example: The policy will take effect July 1, for all on-site meetings longer than two hours in length.

Establish a Timeline

Prioritize action items. Start small and work towards bigger initiatives.⁹ Plan what needs to occur and a timeline with activities that will support the action items with a deadline for completion.

A timeline should be established for each part of the strategy. Timelines must be realistic for completion.⁹ If resistance to a strategy is anticipated, include additional time to build in the necessary approvals for the initiative.¹

Create a Schedule for Activities

Walking initiatives within the workplace should be implemented monthly or quarterly, and during a time that is convenient for participation by the employees.¹⁸ For example, workplaces that employ shift workers may need to offer a program before and after each shift to meet the needs of employees.¹⁸ Employees are more likely to participate in physical activity initiatives if provided during the work day.

Establish a Budget¹⁸

Consider required resources to complete the plan such as staff time, provision of incentives, printed materials and promotion. There is no standard template to create a budget for an individual workplace.



Integrate Activities into Existing Organizational Processes

Ensure walking strategy initiatives are integrated into the organization's overall goals and priorities to remain on the agenda.^{4,7,8,17} Whenever possible, decision-making processes should include a health and wellness perspective when making decisions that impact employee health.¹⁷

Existing policies and procedures should be reviewed regularly to determine the impact on employee health. For example, a performance management system that rewards high output, regardless of how results are achieved, may encourage unhealthy behaviours to complete work with minimal opportunity to be active within working hours.¹⁷

Promote and Communicate the Plan

A communication plan should be developed to inform employees about the planned walking strategy within the workplace. Identify the most effective mode of communicating the plan to employees, especially if there are diverse positions within the organization. Multiple methods for communication may be required and can include email, intranet, pre-shift meetings, team meetings or memos.

When communicating the workplace walking strategy, provide employees with clear and consistent details. Employees will need to have background information on how the strategy was implemented, when the program will take place, where it is safe for employees to walk as well as the benefits associated with this behaviour change. If employee coverage is necessary to allow participation, this should also be communicated.



Figure 4 – Workplace Walking Program Action Plan Worksheet

Upon completion of the Workplace Walking Needs Assessment, reflect on other priorities and make a plan to address these ideas.

Highlight three areas where the workplace is doing well with regard to implementing workplace walking policies and practices:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

List three priority areas where workplace walking practices need improvement:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Once priority areas have been determined, create a plan to improve each area. Start small, even tackling one area will make a difference. Include activities from all four comprehensive health promotion areas: awareness raising, skill building, supportive environments and policy.

Goal: _____

Objective	Target Audience	Strategies				Evaluation Method	Timeline	Person Responsible	Resources Needed
		Awareness Raising	Skill Building	Supportive Environment	Policy Development				

STEP 5 – DEVELOP THE EVALUATION PLAN

Monitoring and evaluating workplace wellness initiatives, such as a walking strategy, within the workplace is an important step in programming. This information will identify successes and opportunities for improvement in the future.¹⁸ Whenever possible, programs should be evaluated based on the goals and objectives established during the planning process.¹⁸

It is also important to evaluate the overall success of the wellness program every three to five years to determine a change in health outcomes of the employees and the benefits to the organization.¹⁷ It is anticipated that this will provide future buy-in from senior management to continue support for wellness programming within the workplace.

Track process indicators as well as short-term outcome measures to determine success or areas to improve the program.⁷ It is difficult to determine longer term success in a workplace walking program as the measurement of reduced sedentary behaviour may take decades to appear.

Different levels of evaluation provide different information outcomes. Evaluation types include formative, process and outcome, each with specific indicators. Figures 5a and 5b provides examples for each type of indicator.

Figure 5a –Formative and Process Success Indicator Examples

Formative Indicators

(These indicators identify if interventions will meet the needs of employees)

- ✓ Use of incentives – Do employees' value incentives offered? Do the incentives motivate staff to participate?
- ✓ Usability of information or interventions – Is the information targeted, relevant and easily understood by employees?

Process Indicators

(These indicators identify what works and does not work in your workplace)

- ✓ Was there representation from all stakeholder groups on the Wellness Committee?
- ✓ Were programs and initiatives implemented according to plans (e.g., designated people were able to carry out their assigned activities)?
- ✓ Track participation rates, uptake of health risk assessments and use of employee assistance programs
- ✓ Were employees satisfied with initiatives?
- ✓ Were program and initiatives implemented and accomplished within budget?

Figure 5b- Short-Term and Long-Term Outcome Indicator Examples

(These example indicators show whether the program met its objectives)

Short-Term Indicators

- ✓ Group statistics of employee physical assessments including physical activity levels, fitness tests, waist circumference, blood pressure, and blood glucose screening
- ✓ Intentions of behaviour change and/or personal goal setting among employees
- ✓ Increased knowledge¹⁸
- ✓ Self-reported behaviour change¹⁸
- ✓ Positive changes in workplace culture¹⁸
- ✓ Positive sustained environmental changes and/or workplace walking policy implementation

Long-term Outcome Indicators ^{5,18}

- ✓ Productivity losses
- ✓ Presenteeism rates (productivity losses)
- ✓ Self-reported job satisfaction and employee morale
- ✓ Employee turnover
- ✓ Disability claims
- ✓ WSIB claims
- ✓ Prescription drug benefits costs
- ✓ Changes in risk factors (aggregate Health Risk Assessment data such as blood pressure, cholesterol etc.)



TIP: Evaluation Example

Using the example of incorporating walking breaks during meetings longer than two hours, if the workplace was to evaluate indicators, it would be determined if goals and objectives were met.

- Do employees understand how to use the standardized agenda? **Formative**
- Was policy implemented by the July 1, target date? **Process**
- Does management need to remind employees to follow the policy? **Process**
- Are managers and employees following the policy? **Outcome**
- Are managers and employees reporting less feelings of fatigue after a long meeting? **Outcome**
- If the policy is not being followed, what is the reason? **Process**
- How satisfied are employees with the new meeting process? **Process**
- Are meetings less productive as a result of new policy? **Outcome**

STEP 6 – CHECK-IN WITH MANAGEMENT

Regular communication between management and the Wellness Committee is important. Ongoing communication promotes support and commitment of the wellness plan. Leaders are also aware of what is being communicated to employees, requests for human resources or financial support and how to role model positive behaviours.

Communication with management should occur at every stage along the process. When developing the wellness plan, organize a final review with management prior to proceeding for approval.



STEP 7 – IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

Upon approval of the wellness plan, it is time to begin implementing workplace walking strategies. It is important to build an evaluation into each planned activity. Suggestions to create a successful workplace strategy include the following:

Launch the Initiative!

Once the workplace walking strategy is ready to implement, have senior management communicate to staff members.¹⁸ Communication should be at various levels and occur several times. The communication should also provide an overview of the benefits of the workplace walking strategy, how these changes will affect the employee at work and how the decision to implement the workplace walking strategy was reached. Workplaces should consider multiple communication strategies such as email, posters, pay-stub attachments, internal websites and team meetings.

Launch the event with activities such as:

- Giveaways
- Contests and friendly competitions
- Loyalty cards as an incentive for selecting healthier options



Engage Employees through Incentives

Incentives can build motivation and increase participation in activities that support healthy behaviours.^{4,7} Employee incentives can send the message that the organization supports the commitment to employee health.¹⁸ Prior to implementing workplace incentives for employees, the workplace should:¹⁸

- Ask employees what rewards are motivational
- Ensure every participant that achieves a goal receives recognition
- Avoid rewards for biometric changes (i.e. pounds lost)
- Avoid offering incentives for the “best” or the “most” which can discourage participation by those who are likely to get the most benefit from joining
- Avoid incentives that are contradictory to other health messaging (e.g. gift certificates for tanning are not consistent with sun safety recommendations)



TAKE ACTION: Ideas for Incentives

- Promotional merchandise from the organization (e.g., cups, pens, day timers, etc.)
- Apparel, or reusable grocery bags promoting a healthy message or the Wellness Committee branding
- Pedometers for walking or cycling
- Gift cards for local attractions, travel, books, malls, music
- Passes to recreational facilities (e.g., swim passes, gym passes, skating, bowling, etc.)
- Useful household items such as magazine subscriptions, beach towels, cooler bags or backpacks, gardening tools, etc.
- Eco-friendly items such as solar-powered cell chargers, crank flashlight/radios, rain barrels, or biodegradable bags
- Tickets for sporting events
- A draw for one big item (e.g. a membership to a local fitness facility, camera, spa package)

STEP 8 – EVALUATE AND UPDATE THE STRATEGY

After program implementation, it is important to begin collecting data from activity evaluations. Regular review of this information will assist in determining next steps for activities and meet the needs of employees.

After a specific time of implementation, the workplace walking committee should provide a report on the program to management and other interested individuals. The report may include whether the walking strategy goals and objectives were met, workplace implications or the results, barriers to participation and recommendations for future improvements. The committee should present the report to management and other key stakeholders along with suggested recommendations.¹⁸ This can help to gain further commitment from your workplace decision-makers.

Celebrate Successes!

Whenever possible, celebrate success! Success should be shared amongst all employees to create and sustain energy, enthusiasm and momentum for future strategies. It is also important to celebrate the success of the Wellness Committee and the collaboration that was achieved between management, employees, human resource staff and employee union groups.



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STRATEGIES

Components for a Comprehensive Workplace Walking Plan



WORKPLACE WALKING STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Wellness planning should include all four of the following health promotion approaches to make a sustained impact on a workplace walking program for the employees and the organization. This comprehensive approach assists in the success of the program.

Definitions of Success

The following strategies each contain a “definition of success” that outlines what each strategy should successfully achieve. Workplace program implementation may vary but the end result should be the same. Workplaces may choose specific goals linked to organizational objectives and strive towards achieving the “definitions of success” over a greater period of time. There is no correct time to achieve each strategy.

Awareness Raising

Awareness raising activities provide information to employees about the benefits of making healthy choices. Awareness raising activities can be achieved through the following activities:

- Bulletin Boards and Posters
- Emails, Newsletters & Other Employee Communications
- Point-of-Decision Information
- Pamphlets and Brochures
- Local Walking Opportunities
- Lunch and Learns*
- Mobile Health Technology*
- Displays and Health Fairs*
- Health Screening and Health Risk Assessments*

*These activities may be considered skill building if a hands-on learning component is added (e.g., goal setting, self-monitoring, etc.)

Skill building



Skill building activities help educate employees and develop the necessary skills to support a healthy choice. Skill building initiatives assist the employee to value physical activity as an important part of daily activities.

- Challenges and Contests
- Exercise breaks
- Goal-setting and Activity Plans
- Health Fairs
- Lunch and Learns
- Self-Monitoring Tools
- Walking Programs

Supportive Environment

Strengthen and enhance employees' healthy practices. These activities make it easier for employees to make healthy choices. A work environment that supports physical activity can lead to healthier, active employees.

- Active work breaks
- Shower facilities
- Meetings, workshops and events
- Organizational culture
- Social support
- On-site physical activity classes
- Bicycle racks to promote active transportation
- Social events that include a physical activity component

Policy Development

Policies enhance and sustain healthy practices by clarifying roles and expectations between employers and employees. Establishing a policy can sustain and provide future direction for the comprehensive physical activity program. Workplace walking policies can:

- Allow time for walking
- Formally recognize participation in walking strategies and programs
- Support active transportation activities
- Provide instruction on providing and maintaining environmental supports
- Direct who will provide walking strategies and programs
- Create a culture for walking during the workday

In addition, policies can be implemented to strengthen support for workplace walking in any of the areas that have been covered in this toolkit including:

- Awareness Raising
- Skill Building
- Supportive Environments

AWARENESS RAISING

Awareness raising activities increase employees' general knowledge about a health topic to assist the employee in making a healthy lifestyle choice. In a comprehensive workplace health strategy, it is the first step to support employees in improving physical activity levels. Raising awareness around a health issue can assist employees in understanding what changes will need to be made and why these changes are required. As part of the raising awareness approach, include information on how the environment affects individual health behaviours.

Many strategies can be used to create awareness around walking within the workplace. These activities do not need to be expensive or time consuming. Adding humour, statistics, trivia, weekly health tips and quotes into physical activity education activities makes the messages more meaningful.¹



Bulletin Boards and Posters

Bulletin boards and poster displays are meant to attract attention and provide short, focused pieces of information.

Tips:²

- Post in highly visible areas (e.g., water fountains, kitchenette/cafeteria, staff rooms, elevators, stairwells, washrooms)
- Change information regularly. After 10-20 views, people tend to stop “seeing” information³
- Provide relevant and timely information
- Include “take-away” items that employees can reference at a later time (e.g., pamphlets, bookmarks, maps of walking routes, etc.)

Displays and Health Fairs

Displays

Similar to bulletin boards, displays can create interest around physical activity and walking, especially when an interactive component is included.

Health Fairs

Workplace health fairs are a great way to provide health information from various private and public organizations in the community. Health fairs that offer education, information and pamphlets are considered to be awareness raising opportunities. However, skill building can also be incorporated into health fair displays (e.g., urban pole walking, goal setting, self-monitoring, etc.).



TAKE ACTION: Health Fairs

To invite a Niagara Region Physical Activity Advisor to your next workplace health fair, visit http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/physicalactivity/paa.aspx

Emails, Newsletters and Other Employee Communications

Emails

Email messages have the potential to reach large numbers of employees and are suitable for employees who have access to the internet with a personalized email address. Email messages can increase confidence in overcoming barriers, increase perceptions related to benefits of participation and increase readiness to participate in a walking activity.⁴

Emails may also increase the effectiveness of other strategies (e.g., walking challenges, stairway promotion, etc.).^{5,6,7,8,9,10,11}

Tips for effective use of email messages:⁴

- Keep an archive of previous email messages by topic so employees can review relevant topics
- Track the number of emails viewed (e.g., request “read” receipts) by participants
- Keep emails in a “user-friendly” format and accessible to individuals with limited computer skills
- Identify any employees who will not be reached by email messages and explore other options

Be strategic about the number and length of emails.
Evaluate the communication strategy to ensure that employees are satisfied with the frequency and usefulness of the information.



Newsletters (print or electronic)

Newsletter articles and inserts can enhance support among workers, promote activities or special events and support a corporate culture that encourages physical activity.

Tips:²

- Be clear about the purpose of the article (e.g., information, education, promotion)
- Use an active headline that will attract the reader's attention
- Identify employees who will not be reached by a newsletter and explore other options
- Include content that is relevant to the interests and concerns of the employees
- Use clear language
- Recognize employee physical activity accomplishments

Niagara Region Public Health has a free monthly e-newsletter for workplaces. This e-newsletter offers health-related information that can be passed along to employees. To subscribe to the Niagara Region Public Health Workplace Health e-newsletter visit: http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/workplace/enewsletter.aspx

Other Forms of Employee Communications

Other ways to communicate information about walking to employees include:

- Simple messages on pay cheque stubs or pay cheque inserts
- "Pop-up" messaging when employees use the company intranet



Events

Plan events in advance and include promotional materials to help launch and celebrate the workplace event.



HELPFUL TOOLS: Links to Events

Visit <http://commuterchallenge.ca/blog/> for more information on the Commuter Challenge and <http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca> for Healthy Workplace Month. For a detailed list of Health Promotion Calendar Days visit <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/calend/index-eng.php>

Health Screening and Health Risk Assessments

Many employees appreciate the opportunity to be screened for health conditions while at work. This can be especially important for those individuals that do not have regular access to a physician. Health Risk Assessments (HRAs) can be a useful supplement when providing a health education component but it is a cost to the employer.¹² Assessments of health risks with feedback can be effective when combined with health education programs, with or without additional interventions.

Assess levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviours such as:

- Overall levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviours. Compare these against Canadian Physical Activity Guideline recommendations¹³
- Frequency or duration of physical activity¹³
- Aerobic fitness, assessed through on-site biometric screening [e.g., blood pressure, blood cholesterol, body composition (i.e., waist circumference, BMI), strength, flexibility, etc.]^{13, 14}



HELPFUL TOOLS: Health Risk Appraisals Resources

For more information about Health Risk Appraisals refer to *Health Risk Appraisals at the Worksite: Basics for HRA Decision-Making* by the National Business Coalition on Health: http://nbch.kma.net/NBCH/files/ccLibraryFiles/Filename/000000000042/HRA_Updated_o80303.pdf

Local Walking Opportunities

Many walking opportunities exist throughout the year. Promote walking groups or trails at or near the workplace.

Tips:

- Promote walking routes inside the workplace, on workplace grounds or in the surrounding neighbourhood
- Promote walking at nearby shopping malls or indoor tracks
- Place outdoor trail maps in an accessible area and post on the intranet

Trails in the Niagara region:

http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/physicalactivity/trails.aspx

Greater Niagara Circle Route:

<http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/initiatives/gncr/default.aspx?topnav=1>

- Promote cycling trails for all ability levels: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/exploring/cycle/default.aspx>

Promote existing walking groups that are located throughout Niagara Log on to Information Niagara <http://niagara.cioc.ca/> and use the search term “walking groups”



HELPFUL TOOLS: Create Your Own Walking Map

Creating custom walking maps of routes of varying distances near your workplace with an online application like gmap
(<http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/>)

Lunch and Learns

Employees can be educated on the benefits of physical activity and walking for fun and fitness over the lunch hour in a *Lunch and Learn* session. *Lunch and Learn* sessions allow individuals to eat lunch in a designated area while receiving some training on a specific topic. Lunch can be brought in by the employee or catered. Ideally, the topic for a *Lunch and Learn* session should be covered in a 30-45 minute session and can include topics such as goal-setting for physical activity, how to use a pedometer or how to urban pole.

Niagara Region Public Health has trained Physical Activity Advisors available to provide a *Lunch and Learn* session on the Benefits of Walking. For more information on how to book a presentation, visit <http://www.niagararegion.ca> and search Physical Activity Advisors or call 905.688.8248 ext. 7395.

Mobile Health Technology

Mobile Health (mHealth) involves the use of mobile phone technology to promote health, prevent disease and provide health care. Such technology includes, but is not limited to, text messaging and Smartphone applications.¹⁵

Text Messages

Text messaging is the least advanced, but most widely adopted and least expensive of mHealth technologies.¹⁵ According to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunication Association, Canadians send 224 million text messages per day.¹⁶ The use of text messaging varies by age, culture and other demographic factors.

The use of text messaging for preventive health behaviour change is relatively new. Preliminary research on the use of text messaging has demonstrated that, at least in the short term, that health messaging may encourage positive health behaviours, such as walking.^{15,17,18}

If choosing to use text messages as a form of positive encouragement for health behaviours, be sure to have permission so that the text is not unsolicited. Consider tailoring messages to individuals to enhance effectiveness.^{17,18}

- Incorporate individual goals into messages
- Allow participants to write the messages they will receive
- Allow participants to specify days and times when they would like to receive the messages

Smartphone Applications

Smartphone applications are available to assist individuals in monitoring physical activity.¹⁹ As a motivational tool, a smartphone application can simply monitor health habits but does not create a change in behaviour. A few of the smartphone applications available to assist individuals with increasing physical activity include, but are not limited to:

- GPS tracking to measure distance travelled
- Pedometers or accelerometers to measure steps taken or movement intensity
- Logs or diaries to record frequency, intensity, time and/or steps taken
- Physical activity programs or routines
- Personal coaching

It should be noted that many smartphone applications are not based on established theories of health behaviour change or evidence.²⁰ Accuracy of smartphone applications for tracking physical activity has yet to be established.



Pamphlets and Brochures

Make educational materials available to employees in an accessible area. Informational pamphlets and brochures are available through many agencies free of charge. Display these resources in a high traffic area and consider using commercial literature racks that are available through office and library supply stores. Creative individuals may want to consider creating pamphlet holders from flower pots, baskets or other household items.



HELPFUL TOOLS: Service Ontario

Service Ontario has physical activity brochures available for download or by ordering <https://www.publications.serviceontario.ca/ecom/MasterServlet/ViewMainHandler?loggedIN=false&selectedLocale=en> (Click on "Browse Catalogues" on right side of page, then click on "Health Programs" then click on "Be Active")



Point-of-Decision Information

Point-of-decision information can be an effective strategy to encourage people to make an "active" choice.

Parking Lots

Although not as readily identified as a place where healthier choices can be made, parking lots can be a location for point-of-decision information. Signage can be created at entrances to parking lots encouraging employees to park further from the building to increase the number of steps walked. Special signs can also be created at the far end of the parking lot indicating that the parking space is for employees counting steps.³

Stairways

Signage or visual reminders placed near elevators and escalators can motivate individuals to take the stairs instead.^{21,22}

Stair climbing is possible in many workplaces and requires no special equipment for participation.²³ Many individuals have a high level of confidence in their ability to use the stairs. Employees are likely to choose the stairs if the destination is between the first and fourth floor.²¹ Employees are also likely to use the stairs to travel to lower levels of a building.²⁴

For stairway promotion programs, stairs should be:²⁵

- Easy to find and inviting
- Well-lit, maintained with access to every floor to ensure safety

Stair climbing interventions can increase the use of stairs by six to 15 per cent.²³ Use of point of decision making as a longer term physical activity strategy. If posters are removed, it is likely that employees will use elevators and escalators as the primary choice of moving between floors in a building.²⁶



HELPFUL TOOLS: Stairway Promotion Resources

Public Health Agency of Canada - Stairway to Health

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/index-eng.php>

Move More North Carolina – A Guide to Stairwell Initiatives

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/StairwellGuide/StairwellGuide.html>

California Department of Public Health – Guide to Improving Worksite Stairwells

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP-StairwellsTool.pdf>

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SKILL BUILDING

The health benefits of physical activity are widely publicized. Despite these benefits, many adults between the ages of 18-64 years are not meeting the minimum 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity weekly. Skill building activities in the workplace can assist in motivating employees to be active by building confidence and competence in the ability to initiate and maintain a physical activity program.¹

Skill building activities enhances an individual's ability to address a health issue or concern. Skills are the tools that adults learn to begin and sustain a lifetime of physical activity. Skill building activities within the workplace can include how to perform a specific physical activity, how to set personal goals, how to minimize physical activity barriers or how to incorporate active living strategies daily.

Definitions of Success

- Skill building opportunities are provided to employees on a regular basis
- Skill building activities build on the individual's capacity to perform a certain skill
- Skill building activities enhance confidence and competence towards an active, healthy lifestyle



Challenges and Contests

Challenges and contests are a great motivational tool to encourage employees to try a new behaviour. Counting steps or minutes of activity can yield increased employee participation in a walking program. If considering a workplace walking challenge or contest, practical suggestions can assist the employee in making this activity part of everyday living.

Try these suggestions before implementing a workplace walking challenge:

- Consider creating a contest or challenge that is at least two months in duration to encourage employees in adopting the walking routine as part of their everyday lifestyle. This duration will support the employees to form walking as part of a new lifestyle habit.²
- Walking challenges do not need to be held in warm weather months only. A winter active challenge is a great opportunity to encourage physical activity in colder months.
- Challenges should focus on positive behaviour changes instead of weight loss.
- Provide healthy living incentives if using giveaways. Pedometers, reusable water bottles, or play-based activities are great ideas.
- Launch the challenge with a workplace activity or event.
- Have FUN!



Walking versus Weight Loss Challenges

The popularity of television shows such as *The Biggest Loser*® have inspired similar weight loss challenges in workplaces. While these programs make great reality TV viewing, it is not recommended for implementation within the workplace. The television show contestants have medical supervision, personal trainers and nutrition consultants. Employees will likely not have these supports in the workplace.

If a workplace is interested in hosting a challenge, it should be around individual goals to increase physical activity or healthy eating.



HELPFUL TOOLS – Workplace Walking Challenge “How-to” Guide

A useful “how-to” guide for implementing a walking challenge is available for download from Niagara Region Public Health:

Niagara Region Public Health Workplace Walk for Wellness Challenge

http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/workplace/walk-for-wellness.aspx



Physical Activity Breaks

Activity breaks are unstructured, occasional opportunities for employees to get up from work stations or during longer meetings. These quick breaks allow the employee to reduce the amount of time spent sedentary during the workday. Activity breaks incorporated into a meeting are a type of environmental support.

Employees can be encouraged to participate in activity breaks at their workstation. Online supports are available to guide the employee in stretching for those with internet access.



HELPFUL TOOLS: Worksite Stretching and Exercise Resources

A number of useful resources are available on the internet, including:

The Alberta Centre for Active Living videos for exercising and stretching at workstations (<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/trr/tools.html>) including:

- Exercising Your Hands and Wrists @ Your Desk
- Stretching @ Your Desk
- Yoga @ Your Desk

Worksite Exercises – University of Toronto Environmental Health and Safety - www.ehs.utoronto.ca/services/Ergonomics/exercise.htm

Goal-setting and Activity Plans

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines encourage adults between the ages of 18-64 years to accumulate a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per week. While 150 minutes may seem overwhelming to some employees, it is important to highlight that everything counts and that the activity can be broken into bouts of 10 minutes or more throughout the week.

Goal setting is a popular tool to motivate an individual to change behaviour. Success has been achieved by individuals who have set S.M.A.R.T. goals for becoming physically active. When an employee is establishing S.M.A.R.T. goals, it is important for the individual to identify why physical activity is important personally. S.M.A.R.T. is often used when referencing goal-setting and each letter describes an attribute useful in creating a physical activity plan. See section #3 *Getting Started* for more information on how to develop S.M.A.R.T. goals.

Workplace walking strategies that include goal-setting are more likely to be successful.^{3,4,5,6} Goal setting can be easily incorporated into Lunch and Learn Presentations and Walking Challenges. Goal setting should stretch an individual's limit gradually, but still feel achievable with commitment to some change in behaviour. Breaking a large goal into smaller tasks allows the employee to reach success earlier and stay motivated to continue to achieve the greater purpose.



Health Fairs

Health fairs that are staffed can provide skill-building opportunities. Niagara Region Public Health has trained volunteer Physical Activity Advisors that can provide skill-building opportunities at health fairs. Other vendors can be individually contacted to participate and provide a demonstration of a new activity for staff.

Lunch and Learns

Lunch and Learn sessions can include skill-building components such as goal-setting, one-time demonstration session (e.g., using walking poles or snowshoes). Skill-building Lunch and Learn sessions can be booked through the Physical Activity Advisor Program by contacting Niagara Region Public Health at 905.688.8248 ext. 7344 or by visiting www.niagararegion.ca and search "Physical Activity Advisors".



Self-Monitoring Tools

Self-monitoring tools enable employees to keep track of walking time and duration. Self-monitoring tools contribute to the effectiveness of other strategies including goal-setting, walking programs or challenges.^{7,8} These tools can track progress to assist the employee and increase self-efficacy. The effectiveness of self-monitoring tools may be greater in people who are not already regularly active.⁹

Logs & Diaries (paper or electronic)

Paper-based, self-monitoring tools could include the use of a regular calendar to record walking, or a specific diary, or log, to record goals or time spent being active.

There are sophisticated methods for tracking physical activity, such as electronic programs. Electronic programs often allow the employee to track individual goals and receive feedback based on activities.



Helpful Tools: Physical Activity Logs

Examples of physical activity logs and tools available on the internet include:

Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC)

Walk This Way monthly calendar (downloadable)

<http://ophea.net/category/program-name/parc>

Physical Activity Line

Weekly self-monitoring tool (downloadable)

http://www.physicalactivityline.com/pdf_files/pal-doc_physicalactivitylog.pdf

Pedometers

A pedometer is a tracking device worn at the waist to measure the number of steps taken by an individual. Some models can calculate distance travelled or calories burned providing the user inputs additional data. Most pedometers are convenient and easy to use.^{8,10} Individual users are encouraged to conduct a “step test” to determine accuracy. While pedometers can be an effective motivational tool, limitations do exist.^{9,11}



- Pedometers only count movements associated with walking^{8,9}
- Pedometers may under-report steps based on walking patterns^{9,12}
- Pedometers must be worn upright and securely attached to waist of clothing. This may be difficult for individuals who are pregnant or have a larger abdomen⁹
- Pedometer usage creates motivation for walking for a short duration. Long term use is not effective for changing behaviour^{11,13}

Pedometers may change behaviour for a short period of time. Workplaces are encouraged to consider using pedometers as one component of a comprehensive walking strategy to encourage employee physical activity.¹³

Choosing Pedometers

If a workplace is interested in incorporating pedometers into a comprehensive walking strategy, a few considerations should be made prior to purchase. The following pedometer features and qualities should be considered:⁹

- Pedometers are most accurate for counting steps and less accurate for calculating distance travelled or calories burned.
- Higher quality, walking grade pedometers are usually more expensive but are more accurate than those pedometers that are found as promotional items. A decent pedometer can cost between \$8-\$20 at a local sporting goods store.
- Consider a pedometer that offers a cover over the display area to avoid an accidental reset of the steps counter.



DID YOU KNOW?: How to Conduct a Pedometer “Step Test”⁹

A “step test” involves walking 20 steps with the pedometer attached to the waist. After these 20 steps, the pedometer is checked to confirm an accurate reading of steps. If there are significant differences between actual steps and counted steps, it may indicate a faulty pedometer or incorrect placement of the pedometer on the waist.

Walking Programs

Walking programs are typically time limited and successful in encouraging short-term positive changes in step counts.¹⁴ Walking programs that are offered on an ongoing basis are considered to be an environmental support.

Walking programs can be more effective if the following strategies are considered:

1. Time

Offer paid time for employees to participate in a walking program.^{15,16,17}

2. Structured Programs

Use a structured program that gradually increases walking goals. A structured program may also include components for goal-setting and how to overcome barriers.^{5,8,9,17} Structured programs can also include guided-walks led by trained walk leaders.^{14,18}

3. Targeted Programs

Consider walking programs that prioritize a certain employee group, such as employees who are presently sedentary or employees who are looking to take physical activity to the next level.^{19,20,21} Regardless of the audience, the program should be tailored to meet the needs of the employees.^{4,20,22,23} Whenever possible, allow employees to tailor the program to meet individual circumstances.^{24,25,26}

4. Integration

Consider linking the walking program with other health promotion topics such as healthy eating or smoke-free living initiatives.

5. Goal Setting

Encourage employees to set personal goals related to physical activity. Personal goals will increase motivation for participation, especially if the goals are realistic and attainable.

6. Rewards and Incentives

If possible, consider rewards or competitions to motivate employees to work towards achieving personal goals.^{16,25} Rewards do not need to be monetary but rather can include recognition for a personal goal that is achieved.

7. Personal Feedback and Support

Feedback containing information on progress towards meeting goals keeps participants motivated.^{23,25} Ensure feedback is timely and permission to share is granted prior to announcing an employee's goal to the entire workplace. Include social support opportunities when creating a workplace walking program. Supported employees will be more successful at changing behaviour than those individuals without support.^{23,27}

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SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

A supportive environment includes an ongoing, sustainable activity that encourages the healthy choice to be the easy choice. Workplaces can provide an environment that supports healthy active living.



An individual's environment impacts physical activity levels. Interventions aimed at improving design can increase physical activity levels of employees.¹

The environment is an important approach to increasing employee physical activity levels. These changes require less intervention, personnel and financial resources, and are more sustainable than individual approaches.¹ While individual approaches to changing the environment can also be added, these are less successful without an improvement to the environment.¹ Environmental interventions place less responsibility on individuals, eliminating a barrier to reach employees.

Social and physical environments should be addressed as these are foundational to workplace culture. If employees do not perceive that the workplace supports physical activity and movement throughout the workday, it is unlikely that they will participate in other environmental supports offered within the workplace.

This section is further divided into six sub-sections focusing on a different aspect of a supportive environment within the workplace. Definitions of Success for each topic are included to assist an organization with the application of these to the workplace.

Supportive Environment References

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Active Work Breaks

The Ontario Employment Standards Act mandates that employees receive a 30 minute meal break free from work after working more than five hours in a row. Employers are not required to give employees other types of breaks, although many collective agreements between employers and unions provide two 15-minute breaks (one in the first half of the shift and a second in the latter half) in addition to a meal break.¹

Traditionally, breaks were provided within the workplace to lessen fatigue, injury and boredom, especially for employees performing repetitive tasks.¹ Active work breaks provide an opportunity to reenergize within the workday and provide the positive effects of reducing physical discomforts and injuries.^{2,3,4,5} Despite the associated benefits of an active work break, it is estimated that only 17 per cent of employed Canadians participate. The main reason for not being active during these breaks is lack of time.⁴ Creating a supportive work environment that promotes active breaks can increase staff participation.

Definitions of Success

- Employees are not expected to work through breaks to meet deadlines
- Employees are encouraged and supported to get up and move during break times
- Employees have places to walk during short breaks
- Active work breaks are incorporated into the work day or shift



Needs Assessment

During the initial needs assessment, barriers to participation may have been identified on why employees are not participating in active work breaks. When considering the workplace environment and determining how active breaks can be supported, consider:

- Current policies and collective agreements on the issue of breaks
- Number of employees that take breaks
- reasons why employees may skip breaks

For more information on Needs Assessment, visit the previous section on this topic, return to section 3, *Getting Started*.

Implementing Active Work Breaks

Employee interests and opportunities

Prior to the implementation of an active work break, consider the interests of employees and the time provided for the activity to occur.

- What is the preference of employees for an active work break (e.g., walking, tai chi, stretching, etc.)?
- What are the current skills of the employees? Are there employees who are trained or qualified to lead an activity (e.g., race walking, urban pole walking, tai chi, stretching, etc.)?
- What facilities are available to safely perform an active work break (e.g., stairwells, hallways, common areas, meeting rooms, outdoor grounds, etc.)?



Supportive management practices

Management should understand the importance of physical activity on the health of the employee and the cascade effects on the organization. Management support is important to create a workplace culture that supports employees taking breaks rather than working through the day without an opportunity to break concentration and move. Management commitment and participation will create a workplace environment that demonstrates that active work breaks are beneficial to the health and wellbeing of employees.

Spontaneous versus scheduled breaks

Depending on the workplace, it may not be possible to have a break at the employee's desire due to coverage, factory lines or commitments. If breaks need to be scheduled, a plan should be created on how an active break could occur within the workplace. Offering opportunities to be active during this scheduled time should be available.

Reminders to take a break

Some employees may benefit from a break reminder. Resources are available to assist employees to get up and move about from their workstation, such as using an electronic reminder through a corporate calendar system, smartphone application, or a traditional hour glass or egg timer indicating when the alarm goes off it is time to move away from the workstation and get active.



HELPFUL TOOLS: Books

The following books can be purchased through a local book store to assist in creating active breaks at work.

Booster Breaks: Improving employee health one break at a time

by Wendell C. Taylor and Karen L. Pepkin (2010)

<http://www.boosterbreaksbook.com/>

Instant Recess: Building a fit nation 10 minutes at a time

by Toni Yancey (2010)

Active Work Breaks References

- ¹ Ontario Ministry of Labour. (2000). Your Guide to the Employment Standards Act, 2000. Retrieved October 29, 2012 from the World Wide Web
http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pdf/es_guide.pdf
- ² Galinsky TL, Swanson NG, Sauter SL, Hurrell JJ, Schleifer LM. (2000). A field study of supplementary rest breaks for data-entry operators. *Ergonomics*, 43(5): 622-638.
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Facilities

The physical set up and layout of your workplace can influence employee walking.

Definitions of Success

- Employees have access to change rooms, lockers and/or showers
- There is space for employees to get up from workstations
- Stairways are inviting and safe
- Employees have access to fitness equipment during longer breaks
- Places where employees can walk inside and/or outside the worksite are available



Needs Assessment

During the needs assessment, barriers to being active at work should have been identified on the physical set-up of the workplace. Considerations should include:

- Doors to stairwells unlocked and well lit
- Work areas free of clutter and easy to move about
- Informal spaces where employees can stand and discuss business

For more information on Needs Assessment, return to section 3, *Getting Started*.

Creating Supportive Workplace Facilities

Change rooms, lockers, showers and fitness areas that support being active at work

Access to facilities for changing and showering eliminates a barrier for employees who want to use active transportation to get to and from work, and those who want to take a brisk walk on breaks.^{1,2,3,4,5} Fitness areas can be a designated space where classes or equipment are located for use by staff to be active throughout the work day. Treadmills and elliptical machines are types of fitness equipment that can be made available to employees. If space provides and interest warrants, consider a paid instructor program that encourages employees to participate in a program for a nominal fee-for-service.

For the safety of employees, it may be worthwhile to create a policy to outline use of the facilities (e.g., when, how often) and safety requirements before creating a designated fitness area.



Mapped walking routes

Mapped walking routes inside the workplace and within the surrounding neighbourhood may provide employees with measured walking opportunities. Routes identified indoors may address barriers related to weather and shift work. When creating the workplace routes for both indoors and outdoors, it is important to assess safety hazards and whenever possible address these concerns. Mapped walking routes should include approximate times to complete and distance covered.



HANDY TOOLS: Assessing and Mapping Walking Routes

WalkBC – Step by Step: A workplace walking resource (see “How Walkable is the Area Around Your Workplace” assessment form)

http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/walkbc/WalkBC-WWR_Resources_fillable_v4.pdf

Move More North Carolina – A Guide to Creating Walking Maps

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/WalkingMapGuide/WalkingMapGuide.html>

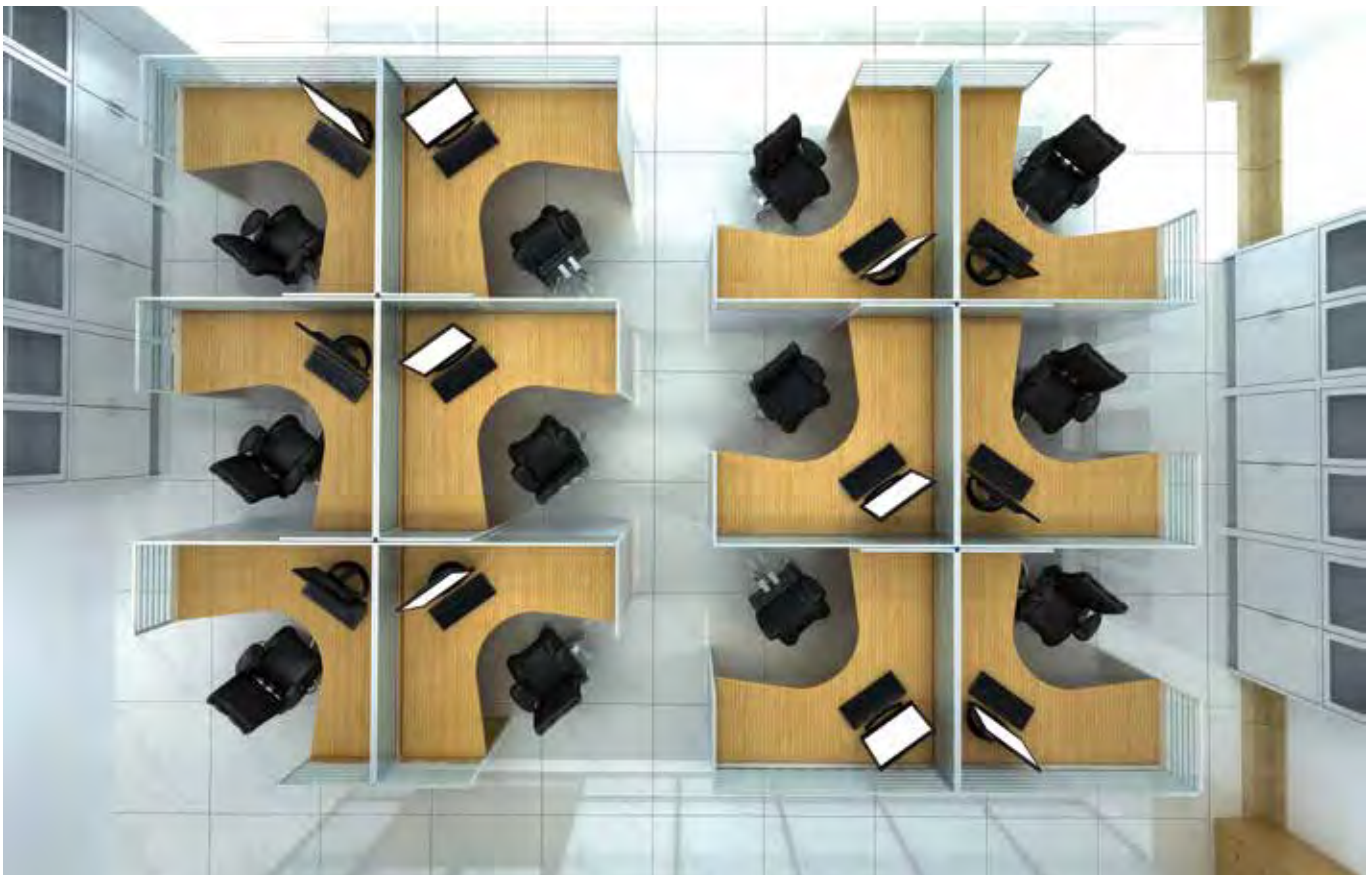


Space planning

The layout of a workplace will influence the number of incidental steps employees take throughout the workday resulting in a possible decrease in sedentary behaviour. Whenever possible consider:

- Location of printers, photocopiers, fax machines, office supply cabinets away from individual desks to naturally break up sitting time for some employees
- Creation of informal conversation areas where employees can discuss work projects while standing. These spaces can also encourage some employees to get up rather than sending emails to a colleague⁶
- Conversion of an existing workstations to include height-adjustable or standing desks⁷
- Implementation of walking workstations⁷

Consultation should occur with the occupational health and safety representative to ensure that proper ergonomic techniques are implemented to minimize the risk of injury and meet relevant health and safety regulations



Facilities References

- ¹ Matson-Koffman DM, Brownstein JN, Neiner JA, Greaney ML. (2005). A site-specific literature review of policy and environmental interventions that promote physical activity and nutrition for cardiovascular health: what works? *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 19(3): 167-93.
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Meetings, Workshops and Events

Meetings, workshops and training often include prolonged periods of sitting. However, these events offer a great opportunity to demonstrate commitment to employee health and well-being by incorporating a physical activity component. It is suggested that when there is prolonged sedentary behaviour, provide a designated break to encourage employees to move. After a few minutes of movement employees will likely return to the table re-focused and re-energized. It is ideal to incorporate planned stretch breaks into meetings, workshops or events so that the opportunity for movement is not decreased due to time constraints of other priority items on the agenda.¹

Definitions of Success

- ✓ Employees have the opportunity to move for one to three minutes every hour during meetings, workshops, training or other planned events
- ✓ Stretch and activity breaks are incorporated into meeting agendas, workshops or other planned events
- ✓ Employees are supported and encouraged to participate in walking meetings, when possible



Needs Assessment

During your needs assessment, determine existing barriers that occur as a result of workplace meetings, training and workshops. Review meeting practices within the organization and whenever possible, consider the following:

- Activity breaks included as part of meeting and workshop agendas
- Active icebreakers, energizers and small group discussions to encourage movement in workshops
- Designated indoor and outdoor areas for walking meetings

For a review on how to perform a Needs Assessment, refer to section 3.0, *Getting Started*.

Creating Healthy Meetings, Workshops and Events

General Suggestions:

Encourage employees and other participants to move more during meetings, workshops, training and other events by:

- Hosting events in a room large enough for participants to stand and still contribute to the meeting
- Encouraging casual dress code whenever possible
- Including an active break on the agenda or schedule short stretch breaks of one to three minutes for every 60 minutes of meeting time
- Scheduling meal breaks that provide time for the meal and a quick walk
- Encouraging participants to stand at any time during the meeting
- Planning meeting activities that allow participants to move as part of the discussion and decision-making. Use of small groups, flip charts and breakout sessions allow the participants to move about during the meeting
- Posting signs near the elevators directing participants to nearest stairwell



HANDY TOOLS: Workplace Walkability Audit Tool

The U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention offers a tool to assess worksite walkability including pedestrian facilities, destinations and surrounds along and near a walking route. The tool helps identify specific improvements that would make the route more attractive and useful for employees. This resource can be accessed at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/hwi/toolkits/walkability/index.htm>

“Meetings on the Move”

Walking meetings offer the opportunity for employees to “think on the feet”. Walking, even at a leisurely pace, can improve memory, prioritization, strategy and multi-tasking.² Employees who participate in walking meetings report improved productivity and communication, as well as a greater sense of community and collective responsibility.³

Walking with only one other person is the easiest type of walking meeting, although walking meetings can be organized for any size of group.

Small Groups (three to five people)

Conversation can occur while walking or the group could stop periodically along the walking route. However, the width of the hallway, sidewalk or path may affect the dynamics of conversation.⁴

Larger-Sizes Groups (six or more people)

Multiple conversations will naturally occur as the size of the group increases and therefore, large size walking meetings may be less effective. Walking meetings with larger groups will require more advanced planning. A group leader and a few assistants may be needed.⁴ An option for larger meetings includes using walking for small group discussions. After a designated amount of time, the small group can report back to the larger group and provide discussion highlights.



HANDY TOOLS: A Guide to Making Physical Activity a Part of Meetings, Conferences and Events

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has an excellent resource to help meeting organizers add movement to meetings, conferences and events. This resource can be accessed at:

<http://eatsmartmovemorenc.com/PABreak/PABreak.html>

Tips for Successful Walking Meetings:

- Prepare and circulate an agenda ahead of time^{4,5,6,7}
- If there is a need to record the discussion or decisions, consider the use of an electronic recorder or create notes immediately following the meeting. Circulate meeting minutes to participants to confirm that discussions and decisions are accurately captured⁶
- Conduct walking meetings at a comfortable pace so all participants can speak easily without being out of breath.^{5,6} For participants with varying physical abilities, some adjustment may be needed
- Choose a route that accommodates pedestrians and the abilities of the participants that will be walking⁴
- Encourage participants to carry a water bottle while walking and wear comfortable shoes⁵



DID YOU KNOW?: Historic Context of Walking Meetings

Walking meetings are not a new concept. Walking inspired the productivity of many great people. Aristotle, the Greek Philosopher, taught while walking with his students. In fact, Ancient Greece's Peripatetic School of Philosophy's name is derived from the walkway in the Lyceum in which he first taught.⁴ "Peripatetic" is an adjective that means "walking or travelling." After Aristotle's death, a legend arose that he was a peripatetic lecturer meaning he walked about as he taught.⁸

Meetings, Workshops and Events References

- ¹ North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. (2009). Move More North Carolina: A guide to making physical activity a part of meetings, conferences and events. Retrieved November 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web <http://eatsmartmovemorenc.com/PABreak/PABreak.html>
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- ⁵ Center for Health Improvement (2005). Walking meetings energize body and mind. Retrieved November 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web <http://www.chipolicy.org/pdf/5678.Walkingpercent20Finalpercent20Afterpercent20Publicpercent20HW.pdf>
- ⁶ Living Streets. Walking works: How to run a walking meeting. Retrieved November 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/walking-meeting.pdf>
- ⁷ Victoria Walks. How to conduct a walking meeting. VicHealth, Victoria Australia. Retrieved November 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web <http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/Assets/Files/Howpercent20topercent20conductpercent20apercent20walkingpercent20meeting.pdf>
- ⁸ Dictionary.com. Retrieved November 1, 2012 from the World Wide Web. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/peripatetic>

Social Support

Social support from co-workers, management and friends can increase employee physical activity levels throughout the workday. Relationships can assist an individual to feel positive and increase motivation to be physically active. The psychological benefits of physical activity include improved outlook and self-efficacy. These characteristics may result in an increase in the ability to handle stressful events.¹

Social support can be flexible or formal. A formal program would see partners establish a contract guaranteeing both buddies will be active. Another form of social support can be in a group format such as a walking group. Walking groups provide motivation, companionship and support while walking.² Workplace walking strategies that have a built in component that include social support have been shown to increase:²

- time spent in physical activity by approximately 44 per cent
- frequency of exercise by approximately 20 per cent
- aerobic capacity by approximately five per cent

Building social support into workplace walking strategies can increase success. For example, research on pedometer-based activities has concluded that social support is an essential component for success^{3,4} and utilizing social support networks is more effective in increasing physical activity levels than the use of pedometers as a single strategy.⁵

Definitions of Success

- ✓ Employees identify adequate social support for walking
- ✓ Social support is built into other workplace walking activities, strategies and programs



Needs Assessment

During the needs assessment phase, existing social support networks and opportunities should have been identified. Barriers to accessing social supports based on the work environment may have also been identified by employee groups.

Refer to section 3.0, *Getting Started* for information about Needs Assessments.



Creating Social Support in the Workplace

Walking Buddies

Not all employees will be interested in joining an organized walking group. Depending on work schedule, responsibilities and walking ability, some employees may prefer to walk with only one or two other people.

Based on the work environment and personal relationships, some employees will have natural support systems for walking. Rotating shifts, satellite offices, small department sizes are some factors that create difficulty in building a “buddy” system.

Suggestions to support employees in establishing a social network for walking include:

- Creation of a “Walking Buddy Board”. This can be done electronically using an employee portal or on a bulletin board. The “Walking Buddy Board” allows employees to link with someone who is available to walk on similar days, times or shifts
- Encourage active employees involved in a walking program to invite a co-worker along on one of the regular walking breaks
- Host a walking challenge in teams of two and encourage friendly competition and goal setting

Walking Groups

Organized walking groups can occur before the start of a work shift, during existing work breaks or after work. A walking group can be formal with registration, or informal without commitment to walk on a regular basis.

Choose the Leaders

Prior to initiating a walking program, identify three to five employees to launch the walking strategy.⁶ These individuals can promote the program and encourage participation amongst co-workers. Leaders for the walking group can be individuals who currently walk during breaks or members of the sub-committee that developed the walking strategy. Walking group leaders should include all employee groups that have demonstrated organizational commitment to walking in the workplace.

Choose a Time

A walking group does not have a minimum number of weekly walks but a regular, scheduled time two to three days per week is ideal.⁶ For those organizations that employ shift workers, consider additional walking groups to accommodate participation from these employees. Once a meeting time has been established, designate a meeting spot that will begin the walk.



Choose a Route

Identify a route that can easily accommodate the majority of the group safely. If the organization is located in a neighbourhood that is unsafe for walking, (e.g., located on a major roadway without sidewalks) consider creating a route for walking indoors on the property of the organization.

Promote the Group(s)

Whenever possible, promote the walking group so that employees become interested in walking at work. Workplace champions may want to personally invite other employees to participate. Launching the workplace walking group with promotional materials such as flyers or a celebration is a great way to also attract interest.



HANDY TOOLS: Creating Workplace Walking Groups

Niagara Region Public Health Physical Activity Advisors can present a workplace module on Walking for Fun and Fitness to your organization. This module has practical tips and suggestions on how to create a walking group within the workplace. For more information, contact 905.688.8248 ext. 7344

Social Support References

¹ Gorin SS. (2006). Models of health promotion. In: Gorin SS. Arnold J, editors. *Health Promotion in Practice*. California: Jossey-Bass; 2006. p. 21-66.

² Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Chapter 2: Physical Activity. *The Guide to Community Preventive Services: What Works to Promote Health?* New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2005:94-96.

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⁶ California Department of Health. California 5 a Day – Be Active! Worksite Program: A guide to establishing worksite walking clubs. Retrieved November 2, 2012 from the World Wide Web <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP-WalkingClubTool.pdf>

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Supportive workplace policies can help promote healthy behaviour within an organization. A policy is a formal, written statement that clearly demonstrates an organization's position on an issue and helps clarify roles and expectations of management and employees. Well written policies are both informative and direct, clearly outlining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as well as the implications of not complying with the policy.

Definitions of Success

- ✓ Written policies are developed, communicated, monitored and supported by employees and management within the workplace



Policy development is the fourth strategy used to develop a comprehensive approach to wellness programming within the workplace.

A well written policy reflects the values of the organization, ensures consistency in decision-making, fosters sustainability and clarifies functions and responsibilities.¹ It demonstrates a formal commitment to the health of employees and can support the effectiveness of other policies that support employee physical activity choices.²

Physical activity policies are not punitive. They make it easier for employees in the workplace to choose healthier options. Policies should be promoted and made available to all employees and managers in the workplace.



HELPFUL TOOLS :

The policy development process may vary depending on the organization. The following information in this section provides some considerations that may help guide the development process. Niagara Region Public Health has a workplace health promoter who can offer support to organizations interested in developing workplace policies specific to physical activity. Follow this link to request further information or to book a consultation: http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/workplace/free-consultation.aspx

Needs Assessment³

During the needs assessment the organizational climate of the workplace should also be examined. The following is a list of considerations to help guide the process.

- Organization policies and procedures that promote and/or support physical activity or workplace walking
- Existing policies and procedures that may have a negatively impact workplace walking
- Recognition for employees who participate in physical activity
- Policies that promote and/or support active commuting to and from work
- Workplace capacity to support policy implementation, monitoring, enforcement and evaluation.
- Workplace resources to develop an implementation strategy to ensure management and employees are aware of role in following a policy.
- Information about the organizational climate and employee needs/interests to determine priority areas and develop policy options

Refer to section 3.0, *Getting Started* for information about Needs Assessments.



Workplace Walking Policy Development

Build support for the policy^{4,5}

The results of the needs assessment will help determine if the workplace is ready for change and the type of changes employees and employers are willing to accept. If the organization is not ready, perhaps there is a need to revisit the other three health promotion approaches i.e., awareness raising, skill building, and creating supportive environments before a policy approach is taken (refer to Sections 4.1-4.3 for more information).

The policy should represent the needs of both the employers and employees, therefore policy decisions should be made with those who will be responsible for enacting its provisions as well as those most affected by the decisions. Consulting with all who will be affected by the changes is an essential process in policy development and will help to increase employee and management support.

It is important that both employers and employees understand the need to proceed with a policy. In communications, focus messages on the links between a policy and workplace walking, use clear language to communicate solutions, and emphasize that change is warranted and desired. Draw on the results of the needs assessment to demonstrate that the organization is ready for change.

Key stakeholders (e.g. members of the workplace walking committee, management, labour groups) play an important role in the policy development process. These key groups could draft a policy based on identified needs or be responsible for consulting with all interested parties. This group could also present recommendations to senior management and provide advice on how the policy should be implemented (e.g. training requirements), monitored, and evaluated.

Writing a Workplace Walking Policy

Each workplace may have a standardized format for their policies. However, there are some common sections across most templates. Figure 1 on the next page provides examples for these common sections.

Figure 1: Common Policy Sections with Examples

Introductory Statement (A statement that introduces the concept of the policy.)

Example: (Employer name) recognizes the role of walking in the maintenance of health and wellbeing and will foster a workplace culture where workplace walking is valued and encouraged.

Rationale/Objective/Purpose (Concrete examples about why your workplace is implementing the policy – i.e. what is the goal of the policy.)

Example: To prevent prolonged sitting during regular work tasks and during all work functions.

Scope (The definition of where your policy is applicable.)

Example: The policy applies to all workplace departments and during events.

Definition (The definition of what is considered “workplace walking”; so that people know what is included.)

Example: Workplace walking includes:

- Walking that is done on breaks and lunches for 10 minutes or more.
- Incidental steps taken to reduce long periods of sitting.
- Active commuting to and from work.

This policy focuses specifically on reducing sitting for prolonged periods of time.

Principles/Procedures/Requirements (How the policy will be accomplished. Select appropriate policies for your workplace that addresses your workplace needs assessment.)

Example: Meetings will include short breaks (minimum of two minutes in duration) after each 60 minutes of sitting.

Example: Employees who must remain at their workstations for long periods will be provided with regular prompts to get up and stretch.

Example: Employees will be encouraged to use walking meetings for discussions.

Example: At least one meeting space will be equipped with standing height tables.

Example: Shared printers will be located in common areas.

Responsibilities

Management:

Example: Management is responsible for being familiar with their responsibilities under the Policy.

Example: Ensuring that the Policy is posted in the workplace in a visible and accessible spot.

Example: Investigating and dealing with incidents of non-compliance with the Policy.

Responsibilities

Employees:

Example: Being familiar and following through with their responsibilities under the Policy.

Training and Information (How managers and employees will learn about the policy and where they can go for reference materials to assist in following the policy.)

Example: All employees will be provided with appropriate information and instruction on the contents of the Policy.

Monitoring and Accountability (How the organization will monitor compliance and what will happen if the policy is not followed?)

Example: Departments must periodically evaluate the implementation of this Policy and be able to demonstrate compliance.

Other Sections

Policy Considerations to Support Workplace Walking

Workplace walking policies can:

Allow time for walking⁶

- Flexible work arrangements to enable employees to participate in physical activity (e.g. flex-time, extended lunch hours, telework, etc.)
- Designated “walk or work” times throughout the paid work day that employees could use for physical activity (other than breaks or lunch)
- Employer matching (i.e. employees provided with 30 minutes of paid time for physical activity for every 30 minutes of activity they put in on their own time)

Formally recognize participation in walking strategies and programs

- Physical activity subsidies (e.g. gym membership discounts, walking club fees, running shoe reimbursement, etc.)
- Formal policies related to onsite fitness facilities (e.g. who can use, when, medical clearance, etc.)
- Sponsorship of corporate teams in fundraising events (e.g. Terry Fox Run)

Support active transportation activities

- Public transit subsidies (e.g. “shoe leather mileage”/reimbursement for distances walked⁷, corporate transit pass, etc.)
- Altered start time to allow for additional time needed to get to work⁶
- Parking subsidies for employees who park in remote lots⁶
- Inclement weather policy which would provide emergency taxi or transit fare to those who walked to work⁸
-



Offer instruction on providing and maintaining environmental supports, including

- Stairwell maintenance
- Access to lockers, showers, change rooms, etc

Specify qualifications of those who will lead/facilitate walking strategies and programs

- Fitness trainers
- Peer walking leaders

Create a culture for walking during the workday⁶

- Corporate policies that aim to reduce prolonged sitting (e.g. walking meetings, active breaks, avoid meetings scheduled over lunch breaks)
- Provide opportunities for physical activity throughout the day to prevent prolonged sitting at workstations
- Promote walking routes near your workplace
- Casual dress code
- Promote use of stairs
- Manager support for employee physical activity built into managers' performance reviews and/or bonuses



HELPFUL TOOLS : Sample Policies

A number of sample workplace physical activity policies are available on the internet. These can be adapted to address walking specifically.

Utah Department of Health – Exercise and Health Activity Policy

<http://health.utah.gov/hearthighway/pdfs/ExcerciseRelease.pdf>

Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina – physical activity policy template

<http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/PhysicalActivityAndHealthyEatingPolicy/PhysicalActivityAndHealthyEatingPolicy.html>

Government of Victoria, Australia - overarching physical activity policy template

<http://www.workhealth.vic.gov.au/files/file-resources/?a=18945>

Work Well New Zealand – sample physical activity policy (see “Tools” section)

<http://www.workwell.health.nz/vdb/document/178>

City of Presque Isle, Maine - Sit for 60, Move for 3 (while the policy is not provided, background information and where to get more information is provided)

http://www.healthymainepartnerships.org/pdfs/Good_Work/Sit_for_60_Move_for_3.pdf

Implement the Policy

Before policy implementation, consider the following:

- Does the policy meet stated goals and objectives?
- Are the policy objectives S.M.A.R.T.?
- Have decision makers and stakeholders approved the policy?
- What resources are needed to implement and monitor the policy?
- Are timelines realistic and appropriate?
- Does the policy specify operational details that outline roles, responsibilities and timelines?
- Is the policy accessible to all employees?
- Has a policy implementation plan been developed? Does the implementation plan include a communication plan so that all individuals affected by the policy are aware of operational details, and expected behaviour (i.e. at team/ department meetings, orientation sessions, etc.)?

Monitor and Review Policies

Make plans to monitor and review the policy so it remains effective and up-to-date. This will ensure that the goals and objectives of the policy will be met.

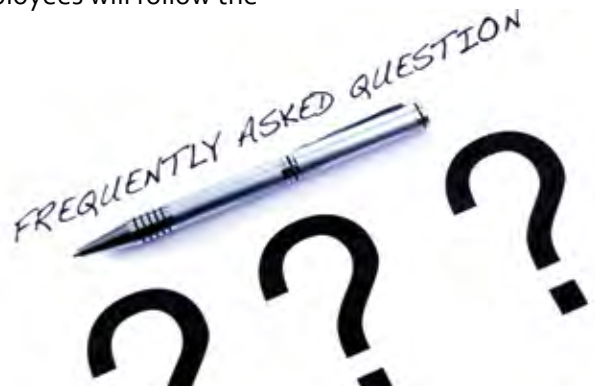


Frequently Asked Questions

Are guidelines the same as policies?

Sometimes guidelines are confused with policies however, it is important to be able to distinguish one from the other. Guidelines are often developed to simplify a set of processes with regard to an established practice. For example, a guideline could provide employees with information that they may choose to use to help make healthier lifestyle choices (e.g. “how to conduct a walking meeting”); yet there is no explicit expectation that individual employees will follow the guidelines or face consequences if they do not.

A policy on the other hand, outlines behaviours which are expected and/or required of all employees, and it is not up to the employees’ discretion as to whether or not they will follow the policy.



Is a commitment statement the same as a policy?

A commitment statement demonstrates that the workplace cares about employee health. For example, “our organization is committed to helping our employees to build walking into their workday”. Although a commitment statement shows a positive intent, it is difficult for employees to determine how this statement should affect their behaviour. For example, when can employees expect to be allowed to walk, and what is the definition of workplace walking?

A policy provides concrete operational details about what is expected of employers and employees. Using the example of an active meeting policy, employees who are responsible for creating meeting agendas know that they are expected to build in regular stretch breaks. A policy defines what workplace walking is, it also defines when employees are allowed to be moving around.

Is having a policy the same as creating a supportive environment?

Supportive environments create a workplace that fosters good health. Within a supportive environment, employees feel that the organization provides them with encouragement, opportunities, and rewards for developing or maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Policies ensure that formal structures are in place to create change which is more sustainable over time.

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GLOSSARY



Accelerometer

Accelerometers are small electronic devices that are usually worn at the hip and record data related to the acceleration of most types of movement people do.

Acceleration is defined as the change in speed with respect to time.^{1,2}

Active Living

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines.

The goal is to accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous activity each week, accumulated in bouts of 10 minutes or more. Individuals may do this in a variety of ways, such as walking or bicycling for transport, performing fitness exercises, participating in sports (both organized and informal), playing in the park, working in the garden, taking the stairs and using recreational facilities.³

Active Transportation

Active transportation refers to any form of human-powered transportation – walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating or skateboarding. There are many ways to engage in active transportation, whether it is walking to the bus stop, or cycling to school/work.⁴

Biometric Screening

Biometric screening is a short health examination that indicates a person's risk for certain diseases and medical conditions. It helps them understand where they should take action to improve their health. The screening uses specific body measurements (e.g., height and weight to calculate body mass index (BMI), systolic and diastolic blood pressure) and a small blood sample obtained by a finger stick to measure cholesterol and blood sugar.⁵ Biometric screening can be one component of a Health Risk Assessment.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a simple index of weight-for-height that is commonly used to classify underweight, overweight and obesity in adults. It is defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres (kg/m²). For example, an adult who weighs 70kg and whose height is 1.75m will have a BMI of 22.9.⁶

The International Classification of adult underweight, overweight and obesity according to BMI⁶

Classification	BMI(kg/m ²)
Underweight	<18.50
Normal range	18.50 - 24.99
Overweight	≥25.00
Obese	≥30.00

Brisk Walking

Brisk walking involves walking at moderate intensity (3.0 to 5.9 METs) – a pace greater than 3.0 km/hr.⁷

Dose-Response

Dose-response refers to the incremental change in something per unit of additional dose. Low doses of exposure produce no or limited response, while increasing dosages produce greater responses until a threshold is reached.⁸ In the case of physical activity, increasing amounts of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity over the recommended levels (i.e., 150 minutes per week) produces greater health benefits.

Health Risk Appraisal

A Health Risk Appraisal is a systematic approach to collecting information from employees that identifies risk factors, provides personal feedback and links the employee with at least one intervention to promote health, sustain function and/or prevent disease. A Health Risk Appraisal typically includes the collection of information related to demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, age), lifestyle behaviours (e.g., smoking, physical activity, alcohol consumption, diet), as well as personal and family medical history. Some Health Risk Appraisals may also include biometric screening (e.g., height, weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, etc.).⁹

Health Risk Assessment (HRA)

The term Health Risk Assessment (HRA) refers to the overall process in which health risk appraisals occur. This process includes orientation, screening, interpretation, health education and counseling.⁹

HRAs that only involve collecting data and providing health education to individual employees are considered an awareness raising activity. HRAs that include assisting employees to identify one or more health goals and set individual action plans for reaching their goal(s) are considered skill building.

Inactivity

An individual is classified as inactive when they perform insufficient amounts of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (i.e., not meeting specific physical activity guidelines).¹⁰

Light Intensity Activity

Light intensity activity is characterized by a metabolic equivalent range from 1.6 to less than 3.0 METs.¹¹ Light intensity activities include domestic or occupational tasks such as washing dishes, cooking, eating, standing and talking and slow walking (≤ 3 km/hr).⁷ While light intensity activity is not considered part of activities that contribute to meeting physical activity recommendations, it does reduce the amount of time spent in sedentary activities.

Metabolic Equivalent of Task (MET)

Metabolic equivalent of task (MET) is defined as the ratio of the work metabolic rate to the resting metabolic rate. One MET is defined as 1 kcal/kg/hour and is roughly equivalent to the energy cost of sitting quietly. As activity increases so does the number of METs used.⁷

Moderate Intensity Activity

Moderate intensity activity is characterized by a metabolic equivalent range from 3.0 to less than 6.0 METs.¹¹ Moderate-intensity physical activities include brisk walking (>3 km/hr), vacuuming, gardening, golfing.⁷

Pedometer

A pedometer is a small, lightweight device that counts the number of steps a person takes by measuring the number of times the hip moves up and down. Like an accelerometer, it is usually worn at the waist attached to clothing or a belt. Some models have additional functions that calculate distance travelled and calories burned.¹²

Physical Activity

Physical activity is any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure above resting level. This includes walking or cycling for transport, dance, traditional games and pastimes, gardening and housework as well as sport or deliberate exercise.³

Sedentary Behaviour

Sedentary behaviour is defined as any waking behaviour characterized by an energy expenditure of ≤ 1.5 metabolic equivalents of task (METs) while in a sitting or reclining posture.¹⁰

Vigorous Intensity Activity

Vigorous intensity activity is characterized by a metabolic equivalent ≥ 6.0 METs.¹¹ Vigorous intensity physical activities include running (>4 km/hr), weight lifting, swimming, dancing, shovelling snow by hand.⁷

Walkability

Walkability is the idea of quantifying the safety and desirability of the walking routes. At work, these can be streets and sidewalks in between buildings on your campus, city blocks if you work in a downtown area, or even walking or nature trails at your work.¹³

Walkability Audit

A walkability audit assesses pedestrian facilities, destinations, and surroundings along and near a walking route and identifies specific improvements that would make the route more attractive and useful to pedestrians. The audit helps to map out the most commonly used walking routes, and helps to identify the most common safety hazards and inconveniences that can keep employees from walking at work.¹³

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