

Health Options at Work: Physical Activity

A Guide to creating a healthy workplace



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Table of Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Goal of this resource	
1.2 Why invest in getting employees active	
1.3 A multi-level approach to physical activity in the workplace	
1.4 Adapting this resource to your workplace needs	
1.5 Additional resources	
• Return on Investment for Canadian Businesses	
• Cost of Physical Inactivity for Canadian Businesses	
2. Building a strong foundation	4
2.1 Make a business case for Active Living at Work	
2.2 Create a healthy workplace committee	
2.3 Assess your workplace assets, strengths, barriers/challenges and gap areas	
2.4 Identify employee needs/interests	
2.5 Draft a proposal and/or plan of action to obtain management and union support	
2.6 Set up a process for employees to provide ongoing input and feedback about programming	
2.7 Evaluate outcomes of program planning and implementation	
2.8 Minimize liability issues / Put safety first	
2.9 Additional resources	
• Sample Consent Form	
3. Awareness Raising: Individual Health Practices	9
3.1 Information that can motivate employees to become physically active	
3.1 Ways to communicate physical activity information to employees	
3.2 Additional resources	
• Resources for your Bulletin Boards	
• Information for Promoting Physical Activity	
• Physical Activity E-Messages or Pay Cheque Inserts	
• Physical Activity Contests/Interactive Activities	

4.	Education/Skill Building: Individual Health Practices	11
4.1	Offer opportunities	
4.2	Build goal setting and action planning skills	
4.3	Develop problem solving skills	
4.4	Plan a variety of activities	
4.5	Ensure personal health & safety while being physically activity	
4.6	Additional resources	
	• Fitbreaks and Stretch Breaks	
	• Tips for Using a Workout Video/DVD in a Workplace	
	• Walking Programs	
	• Workplace Pedometer Lending Program (Hard copy)	
5.	Supportive Social Environment	14
5.1	Increase work-life balance	
5.2	Increase participation	
5.3	Increase motivation	
5.4	Promote social culture	
5.5	Additional resources	
	• Active Transportation	
	• Choosing a Quality Fitness Centre	
	• Developing Physical Activity Policies for your Workplace (including sample policies)	
	• Diversity on the Move	
	• Workplace Health: Shift Work & Physical Activity (Fact sheet for employees)	
6.	Supportive Physical Environment	17
6.1	Ways to utilize the physical environment to increase physical activity	
6.2	Additional resources	
	• Stairway to Health	
	• Create a Physical Work Environment to Support Being Active	

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Goal of this resource:

To provide workplaces with information needed to plan, promote and implement a multi-strategy approach to physical activity programming in the workplace.

After reviewing this resource, you will:

- understand the benefits of physical activity in the workplace for corporate and employee health and well-being
- have information about assessing and planning a multi-strategy approach to physical activity programming to meet your workplace needs
- increase your knowledge of activities and programs to use when planning physical activity initiatives in your workplace

1.2 Why invest in getting employees active?

Benefits of physical activity programming in the workplace

Physical Activity in the workplace has gained increasing momentum over the past decade. Research shows many benefits to employers and employees (See Figure 1). Canadian businesses that have invested in getting employees more active have realized financial savings. (See *Return on Investment for Canadian Businesses*)

Business costs incurred from physical inactivity

In 2001, the economic burden of physical inactivity in Canada was estimated at \$5.3 billion annually¹. This cost is carried by employers and by society at large. Seventy percent of employees' benefit costs are related to chronic diseases i.e. cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, respiratory, digestive, cancer and stress. Being physically active can reduce the risk for these chronic diseases according to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#). Providing a workplace environment that supports physical activity can reduce these costs of operating your business. (See *Cost of Physical Inactivity for Canadian Businesses*)

Figure 1

Benefits to employers

- Improvement in employees' health, morale and productivity
- Reduction in absenteeism, turnover and workplace injuries
- Containment of the costs of benefit programs
- Creation of a corporate culture that values employee well-being

Benefits to employees

- Enhancement of coping with stress
- Improvement in concentration, job satisfaction and team spirit
- Increase in job productivity
- Recovery from minor illnesses more quickly

To assist your workplace towards achieving cost benefits, Toronto Public Health is pleased to present this resource **Health Options at Work: Physical Activity**.

1.3 A multi-strategy approach to physical activity in the workplace

Current research shows that the multi-strategy approach presented in this resource most effectively promotes physical activity within the workplace.² This involves planning a range of initiatives using the following strategies:

- Awareness Raising
- Education/Skill Building
- Supportive Social Environment
- Supportive Physical Environment

This resource presents ideas and provides resources to:

- Obtain upper management support
- Gather information to make strategic decisions in planning
- Plan a multi-strategy approach in physical activity programming including a variety of low-cost activities according to employees' needs, interests and abilities
- Build a supportive social environment through corporate policies and programs
- Build a supportive physical environment through effective use of indoor and outdoor physical space.

Identifying and addressing factors at both individual and environmental levels will contribute to your success and the building of a sustainable physical activity program in your workplace.

1.4 Adapting this resource to your workplace needs

When planning physical activity programs in your workplace it is vital to identify and address things that can influence an employee's decision about taking part in the programs³.

Research shows that some of the factors influencing individual activity choices include:

- work-related barriers
- gender-related likes and dislikes
- age-related likes and dislikes
- level of income and education
- cultural traditions and practices

In order to identify your employees' needs, preferences and barriers and tailor your workplace's physical activity plan for success, we encourage you to conduct a survey to identify your employees' physical activity needs and interests. (Contact Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 to inquire about **Your Health Matters Employee Survey** available from Toronto Public Health.)

We invite you to personalize and build a fun, dynamic physical activity program for your workplace!

1.5 Additional Resources

- Return on Investment for Canadian Businesses
- Cost of Physical Inactivity for Canadian Businesses

(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of these resources)

References:

1. Katzmaryk, P.T., & Janssen, I. (February 2004). The economic costs associated with physical inactivity and obesity in Canada: an update. *Canadian Journal of Applied Physiology*, 29(1): 90 - 115
2. Alberta Centre for Activity Living. (2003). Workplace Physical Activity Framework. P.6
3. Toronto Public Health. (2005). Physical Activity: Needs and Marketing Analysis for the Workplace Channel

Section 2: Building a Strong Foundation

Building a successful physical activity program in a workplace requires making decisions that result in a strong foundation to support ongoing programming. Gaining support and involvement of management, unions and employees is critical. Addressing each of the following areas can achieve a more sustainable success.

2.1 Make a business case for Active Living at Work

To start the process of engaging support from key decision-makers at your workplace and buy-in from management and employee groups across the organization, use a business approach to planning. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), on their website, provides a step-by-step template to guide the development of a customized business case for physical activity programming in a workplace. To review this information, visit: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alw-vat/studies-etudes/index-eng.php>

The brochure *The Business Case for Active Living at Work* developed by PHAC, outlines key benefits of investing in active living in the workplace and the significant impact of the work environment on employees' health. This brochure can be viewed at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alw-vat/pdf/fitflyer-eng.pdf>

A sample **Business Case for Active Living** presentation (power point) is available from Toronto Public Health. Call Toronto Health Connection at (416) 338-7600.

Remember, a dynamic Physical Activity Program for your workplace can be low in cost and straightforward to implement. Start with activities that are simple, easy to manage and within your workplace's budget and commitment.

Figure 2

A proposal to obtain support from management, colleagues and/or union may include the following:

- Benefits of physically active employees for the company, employers and the employees
- Mission Statement and Goals and Objectives of a physical activity program
- Summary of assessments done to gather information about:
 - employees' needs and interests
 - assets and resources (internal and external) available to your workplace
- A brief outline of the activities proposed e.g. walking initiatives, office stretches, stair-climbing
- An estimate of budget, staff and space requirements for overall planning and implementation of each of the proposed activities

2.2 Create a healthy workplace committee

Corporate initiatives succeed best when there are a Senior Executive and Union Representative (as appropriate) leading the initiative and a planning team comprised of workers from all levels and areas of the organization (See Figure 3).¹

The functions of the committee may include:

- Conducting an assessment of workplace assets, strengths, challenges and gap areas for a multi-strategy physical activity program
- Developing a mission statement
- Establishing goals and objectives for the program
- Writing a program proposal (See Figure 2) and/or drafting a plan of action to present to management
- Implementing the approved plan
- Evaluating the program

Figure 3

Some ideas when recruiting for a Healthy Workplace Committee:

- Ensure representation from a cross-section of employee groups and departments (e.g. management, union, shift workers, Communications, Human Resources, etc.)
- Keep committee to a reasonable size - minimum of three; maximum of ten
- Inform members of their roles and time commitment. Be clear about what is expected
- Seek out respected and motivated employees with good communication skills

Developing a Mission Statement and Establishing Goals:

A Mission Statement is a written declaration of the workplace's commitment to physical activity (See Figure 4). The Mission Statement with subsequent goals and objectives provides a guide to the process and progress of your entire Physical Activity program.

Some tips to assist when writing the mission statement are:

- All committee representatives should contribute to the development to ensure broad understanding within the workplace
- The goals should be clearly understood and widely shared with a combination of short, intermediate and long term aims

Figure 4

Sample Mission Statement:

“To create a workplace environment which encourages and supports employees to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine and which values active living as an essential part of both personal and corporate well-being.”¹

2.3 Assess your workplace assets, strengths, barriers/challenges and gap areas

In order to create an effective program, the first step is to assess your workplace assets, strengths, barriers/challenges and gap areas. The assessment will establish baseline data and identify resources and programs that you may already be utilizing in the areas of in the areas of:

- Awareness raising activities - contribute to increasing employee awareness and interest in being physically active e.g. promote benefits of physical activity and Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines
- Education/skill building activities - contribute to increasing employee knowledge and skills to become more physically active on a regular basis e.g. offer a variety of physical activity opportunities e.g. walking, stair-climbing, yoga, weight training, etc.
- Supportive social environment activities - contribute to building a workplace culture where physical activity is encouraged and supported e.g. written policy statements, support for active transportation, subsidy to physical activity sessions/fitness facility membership, recognition and incentive programs
- Supportive physical environments - improve use of the existing physical environment both indoors and outdoors at the workplace to encourage physical activity among employees e.g. walking paths, accessible stairway, room available for physical activity

The information gathered will help to make informed decisions regarding next steps in your physical activity program development.

Identifying and encouraging those employees already interested in physical activity and health to provide leadership or role-modeling can strengthen physical activity in your corporate culture.

2.4 Identify employee needs/interests

To be successful and help increase participation rates, a Physical Activity Program **must** reflect the needs and interests of employees at your workplace.

This information can be collected through an **Your Health Matters Employee Survey**. This allows all employees to contribute early in the planning process.

To increase the rate of response to the Employee Health Programming Survey, try the following:

- Include a supporting letter from senior management and union with the survey.
- Choose a time to launch the survey that does not conflict with major holidays or company peak work periods.
- Promote the survey among all employees. Make a personal tour throughout the workplace to talk about the survey.
- Do not leave anyone out. Remember shift workers. Give consideration to those employees who have English as a second language.

- Remind employees not to sign their names anywhere on the survey. Keep all information provided confidential. Only share a summary of findings (to ensure none of the answers will be connected to individual employees). Ensure completed survey can be returned anonymously.
- Give all employees an incentive to complete surveys.

2.5 Draft a proposal and/or plan of action to obtain management and union support

Develop a plan of action which outlines:

- your workplace goal(s) for a physical activity program, activities or initiatives chosen
- steps needed to implement each activity
- timelines
- budget required
- person(s) responsible for each step

Decisions about program activities should be based on the findings from the situational assessment of your workplace assets and needs, as well as the survey of your employees' needs and interests.

Determine ways to address identified challenges/barriers to physical activity programming for both employer and employees. Addressing these factors in your plan of action will contribute to the success of the physical activity programming in your workplace.

Obtain and allocate the resources needed to implement the action plan e.g. staff, budget (including incentives), equipment, physical space, etc.

2.6 Set up a process for employees to provide ongoing input and feedback about programming

This process will help engage employees in contributing to continuous program improvement. Employee input and feedback can be obtained from suggestion box, contests, surveys, staff meetings or employee representatives.

2.7 Evaluate outcomes of program planning and implementation

Evaluation is an integral part of any program planning. Data related to level of physical activity can be collected before the employees participate in this program and again after participation.

This method of evaluation will give some indication of behaviour changes that occurred as a result of your Physical Activity program. It will help determine if your program is increasing the physical activity level of your employees.

Also consider other measurements as part of the evaluation of your program e.g. activity attendance lists, verbal feedback, evaluation forms or tracking any improvement in absenteeism rates or in medical costs.

2.8 Minimize Liability Issues / Put Safety First

All physical activity involves an element of risk. Program organizers and participants have a shared responsibility to reduce that risk. Your program planning team may refer to [Canadian Fitness Safety Standards](#) for providing a safe physical activity program².

Liability:

- We recommend that you consult with your legal advisor regarding your liability when offering physical activity programming on-site. Consent/Release of Liability Agreement forms can be used if deemed necessary.
- Individuals planning to engage in physical activity should be advised to review [PAR-Q & YOU](#) (a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) to self screen for medical risks. This questionnaire is considered the most appropriate self-screening device available.
 - This questionnaire is **not** for pregnant women, those taking prescriptions for blood pressure or heart conditions or anyone over age 69.
 - If any employees answer yes to one or more of the seven questions on the **PAR-Q & YOU**, they should be encouraged to talk to their health care provider before they start becoming more physically active.

Safety:

- When contracting operators/providers of fitness programs to bring the programming on-site, check that the safety standards set by the operator/provider meet the Canadian Fitness Safety Standards.
- Use public signs to encourage participants to modify activities and/or to proceed at own level of ability.
- Safety signs should be posted in all physical activity areas and physical activity support areas (locker rooms etc.). These signs should include the instructions to clearly indicate safe conduct within the area, correct use of equipment, and instructions outlining emergency procedures.
- Ensure that the physical environment and equipment being used for physical activity programming is inspected for any potential safety hazards before each session.

2.9 Additional Resource

- Sample Consent Form
(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of this resource)

References

1. Cunningham, N. Making it work with Active Living in the Workplace, Retrieved December 4, 2008 from webpage:
http://www.cchalw-ccsvat.ca/english/info/Making_It_Work_Eng%20_2.pdf
2. Canadian Fitness Safety Standards, Retrieved December 4, 2008 from webpage:
<http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/workplace/trr/resources/healthandsafety.html>

Section 3:

Awareness Raising: Individual Health Practices

The goal of Awareness Raising activities is to increase employee awareness of and interest in being physically active in various ways. Appropriate information can motivate and support individuals in moving along a continuum of behaviour change to become more active.¹

3.1 Information that can motivate employees to become physically active

Employees are at different stages of readiness to become more physically active. Provide a full range of information to support employees at these different stages of interest/motivation:

- To encourage employees who are not active to think about becoming more active, emphasize benefits that can be gained. Canada's Physical Activity (PA) Guide provides information on benefits of physical activity including better health, weight control and reduced stress.
- To encourage employees to set goals and make a plan to be more active, Canada's PA Guide provides recommendations for the frequency, length of time, intensity and types of physical activity to give health benefits. (see Figure 5)
- To increase employees' interest and motivation, give information about physical activity programs that are low in cost, easy to access and available at the employees' workplace and in the community.
- To encourage employees to follow through, stay on track and sustain a behaviour change, give information about opportunities for employees to join with one another for fun and support (e.g. buddy system, group activity). Also promote your workplace incentives and recognition programs.

Figure 5

Key Physical Activity Messages from the Public Health Agency of Canada

- Emphasize fun and enjoyment of physical activity
- Encourage beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of physical activity
- Start slowly and build up gradually to foster confidence building and positive attitudes
- Add up physical activities in periods of at least 10 minutes each

Adult Recommendations for Physical Activity: Ages 15 -55

- 60 minutes of light activity daily **OR**
- 30 – 60 minutes of moderate activity 4 – 7 days of the week **OR**
- 20 – 30 minutes of vigorous activity 4 – 7 days of the week
- Ensure a mix of endurance, flexibility and strength activities
- **Canada's Physical Activity Guide** can be accessed at:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/pdf/guideEng.pdf>

Older Adult Recommendations for Physical Activity: Ages 55+

- 30- 60 minutes of moderate activity 4 – 7 days of the week
- Ensure a mix of endurance, flexibility, strength and balance activities

3.2 Ways to communicate physical activity information to employees

We encourage you to communicate information in a variety of ways to reach out to all employees:

- Promote Canada’s Physical Activity Guide using handouts, posters and links to Internet
- Create year-round bulletin board displays e.g.
 - Include an area to publicize physical activity opportunities and events...
 - offered at your workplace
 - in the local community
 - post newsletters, fact sheets, etc. that promote physical activity
 - promote a “physical activity of the month”
- Promote physical activity messages, articles and employee stories in your company newsletter
- Distribute physical activity messages via e-mail or pay cheque
- Post signs to encourage use of stairs
- Promote links to internet sites with physical activity information and opportunities
- Plan interactive health fair to include physical activity component e.g. information re physical activity guidelines and programs available; experts to give information e.g. proper footwear, walking/cycling promotion; demonstration sessions e.g. yoga, tai chi, stretches
- Provide presentations
- Other options e.g. quizzes, contests
- Encourage employee feedback e.g. suggestion box, staff meeting

3.3 Additional Resources

- Resources for your Bulletin Board
- Information for Promoting Physical Activity
- Physical Activity E-Messages / Pay Cheque Inserts
- Physical Activity Contests/Interactive Activities

(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of these resources)

References

1. The Stages of Change. Retrieved December 10, 2008 from webpage:
<http://www.skysite.org/primer/stagesofchange.html>

Section 4:

Education/Skill Building: Individual Health Practices

The goal of Education/Skill Building activities is to increase employee skills to become more physically active on a regular basis.

4.1 Offer opportunities

Gaining skill is a gradual process and requires opportunities to learn and practice. At your workplace, offer a range of activities from the three recommended groups in Canada's Physical Activity Guide at your workplace. Challenge employees to build skill in one or more activities of their choice. The three recommended groups are:

- **Endurance** – continuous activities beneficial to the heart, lungs and circulatory system
 - e.g. • Walking/Jogging/Biking/Dancing opportunities
 - Aerobics sessions
 - Sports opportunities – basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball

- **Flexibility** - stretching and bending activities to keep the muscles relaxed, joints mobile and reduce injuries
 - e.g. • Stretch sessions
 - Yoga classes

- **Strength** - activities against resistance to strengthen muscles and bones and improve posture
 - e.g. • Strength training -- push ups, sit ups
 - Weight lifting
 - Pilates

4.2 Build goal setting and action planning skills

Setting goals and making a personal action plan is an important step to give both focus and motivation. Research shows that people who learn how to write down clear, realistic goals are better able to maintain a commitment to achieving them. Encourage your employees to use the recommendations for frequency, intensity and length of time per activity session from Canada's Physical Activity Guide to create their goals and action plan.

Providing tools for [goal-setting](#)¹ and for tracking progress helps employees to concentrate energy, self-monitor and stay on track.

4.3 Develop problem solving skills

With competing demands on personal time, maintaining a regular physical activity program is often the ongoing challenge for many employees. Building skill in [problem solving](#)² the personal barriers to being physically active in daily living is another step to help employees in the process of staying active regularly.

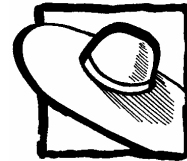
4.4 Plan a variety of activities

- Walking and stair climbing are identified in research as effective ways to get populations active. Along with ‘stretching’, these are activities/programs that are low in cost and easy to implement in the workplace and give great health benefits.
- Research shows that use of a pedometer (to count daily steps walked) is effective in encouraging an individual to increase walking. Contact Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 to inquire about the **Workplace Pedometer Lending Program** offered by Toronto Public Health.
- Plan a range of physical activities (e.g. stretching, walking, dance, yoga, workout, weight-lifting, sport teams, in-house challenges) that allow personal choice based on needs, interests, abilities and stages of readiness.
 - Encourage employees to adapt exercises to their fitness levels or special limitations
 - Create a non-competitive atmosphere that allows all employees to be active at their own level
- Encourage activities that employees can fit into their daily schedules
 - Start meetings with some stretching exercises
 - Ensure physical activity breaks during long meetings e.g. a short brisk walk, some stretching. See 4.6 Additional Resources, Fitbreaks and Stretch Breaks.
 - Map out indoor and outdoor walking routes for varying distances
 - Provide exercise opportunities before work, at lunchtime or after work
- For additional activities, contact Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600 to request a free consultation.

The outcome of education/skill building for each employee should be that physical activity is a regular part of the workday with activities that match individual health needs, interests and level of ability.

4.5 Ensure personal health & safety while being physically active

- Encourage employees to use [PAR-Q & You](#) questionnaire to self-screen for medical risks before starting a physical activity program.
- Being physically active during pregnancy can give positive health outcomes for mother and baby. Promote screening by personal health care provider for employees who are pregnant. Inform these employees about [PARmed-X for Pregnancy](#) questionnaire.
- Educate about the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) and encourage employees to check the AQHI before being physically active outdoors. The Air Quality Health Index can be obtained by calling Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 or by visiting www.airhealth.ca
- Educate employees to be sun safe all year round.
 - Check the forecast for UV Index: listen to the weather forecast or visit Environment Canada's website: www.msc.ec.gc.ca/topics/uv
 - Limit time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. or when the UV Index is 3 or more
 - Look for shady areas to walk
 - Cover exposed skin with clothing. Wear a hat with a wide brim and sunglasses with UVA/UVB protection
 - Use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and with UVA/UVB protection



Call Toronto Public Health for more information about Sun Safety at 416-338-7600 or visit <http://www.toronto.ca/health/cancerprevention/sunsafety.htm>.

4.6 Additional Resources

- Fitbreaks and Stretch Breaks
- Tips for Using a Workout Video/DVD in a Workplace
- Walking Programs
- Workplace Pedometer Lending Program (Hard copy)

(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of these resources)

References

1. Active2010 Fitness Toolkit. Goals Tending (in Skills Tools). Retrieved December 10, 2008 from webpage http://www.active2010.ca/toolkit/en/fitness_toolkit.asp?key=s
2. Active2010 Fitness Toolkit. On the Move to Physical Activity (in Communication Tools). Retrieved December 10, 2008 from webpage http://www.active2010.ca/toolkit/en/fitness_toolkit.asp?key=c

Section 5:

Creating a Supportive Social Environment

The goal of Supportive Social Environment activities is to develop a workplace culture where it is the norm to encourage and support employees to be physically active on a regular basis. Research shows that these following factors are found in a social environment supportive of physical activity:

5.1 Increase work-life balance

- Develop written policies that support employees to be physically active by addressing work-life balance
 - Flexible work arrangements
 - Flex hours
 - Dress down days
 - Stretch break every 1¹/₂ to 2 hours during longer meetings
 - Work-time allowance for physical activity

Note: For more information about steps in policy development and sample policies, see **Developing Physical Activity Policies for your Workplace.**

5.2 Increase participation

- Implement strategies to increase participation in physical activity
 - Promote and support active transportation to and from work with any of the following activities:
 - A committee to plan an active transportation program
 - Incentives to encourage active transportation
 - Promote employees commuting together through walking, cycling, public transportation or carpooling.
 - Subsidize cost of cycling skills training
 - Secure bicycle parking
 - Walking tips and maps
 - Build management support for physical activity programming by any of the following:
 - Management training regarding the link between an active workforce and increased productivity
 - Encouraging and supporting managers to be physical activity role models and/or champions
 - Establish performance measures that encourage managers to support employees to be more physically active
 - Ensure that physical activity programs are inclusive of all employees by any or all of the following:
 - Activities that can be modified according to an individual's level of ability
 - A variety of activities based on individual interests and preferences and at a time that is convenient
 - Physical activity opportunities for shift workers
 - Information about community resources for employees with disabilities

- Promote each physical activity program as much as possible
 - Start promotion early
 - Build interest with regular updates
 - Use various ways to promote e.g. word of mouth, flyers, pamphlets, posters, e-mail messaging, paycheque inserts
 - Make promotion fun with creative use of coloured paper, balloons, humour, music and announcements
 - Have special promotion events e.g. a potluck lunch or activity demonstrations

5.3 Increase motivation

- Promote employee safety and prevent work-related injuries by providing programming that strengthens muscles and/or builds flexibility:
 - Stretch sessions
 - Muscle strengthening sessions
- Provide Recognition programs for any of the following (for both competitive and non-competitive achievements):
 - Demonstration of leadership in planning or implementing physical activity programs
 - Role modelling of regular physical activity
 - Champion of the Month e.g. most active or improved employee of the month
 - Showcasing stories of employees who are physically active on a regular basis
- Motivate employees to be active in any of the following ways:
 - Incentives to encourage participation in physical activity programs on-site
 - Participation in programs during work time
 - Increased/extended break time to allow for short physical activity opportunities
 - Include a budget for prizes (e.g. random draw). Some suggestions are:
 - Sports equipment/bag/water bottles
 - YMCA or YWCA day passes
 - Discount rates for fitness clubs
 - Gift certificates for sporting shoes
 - Company promotional items
 - Sports/leisure wear
 - Sporting event tickets
 - Half or whole day off work
 - Subsidies for:
 - Physical activity sessions/training as part of Wellness program reimbursement (e.g. yoga, dance, self defence, martial arts)
 - Fitness facility memberships
 - Employees' fitness assessments
 - Physical activity equipment (e.g. pedometer, bicycle)

5.4 Promote social culture

- Encourage and foster social support among employees by:
 - Designing activities to require group interaction (e.g. group challenge, scavenger hunt)
 - Setting up buddy systems
 - Encouraging management participation with staff in physical activity initiatives
 - Organizing launch and celebration events
- Sponsor any of the following events:
 - Sports team(s) e.g. baseball team, volleyball team
 - Community events with a physical activity component e.g. Terry Fox Run, Mother Daughter Walk, CN Tower Climb, Big Bike Ride for Heart
 - Physical activity events for employees and families e.g. public skating, swimming, golfing, picnics, dances

5.5 Additional Resources

- Active Transportation
- [Choosing a Quality Fitness Centre](#)
- Developing Physical Activity Policies for your Workplace (including sample policies)
- Diversity on the Move
- Workplace Health: Shift Work & Physical Activity

(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of these resources)

Section 6:

Creating a Supportive Physical Environment

The goal of Supportive Physical Environment activities is to improve use of the existing physical environment both indoors and outdoors at the workplace to encourage physical activity among employees. Encouraging stair use and walking in the vicinity are low cost and convenient ways to increase physical activity.

6.1 Ways to utilize the physical environment to increase physical activity

- Increase stair use by ensuring upkeep of stairways:
 - Safe
 - Clean
 - Well lit
 - Accessible to employees
 - With highly visible sign(s) to encourage use
- Increase walking by:
 - Designating walking paths indoors and outdoors (e.g. signage posted, distances indicated)
 - Distributing maps of these paths
- Ensure that on-site exercise facilities:
 - Allow access to employees with disabilities
 - Have safety protocols and instructions for safe and effective use of the equipment
- Designate room(s) and/or space that can be used for games purposes:
 - Ensure this room/space is accessible to all employees
 - Offer games that require being active e.g. ping pong, pool, mini-golf
- Encourage employees' use of outdoor areas or playing fields:
 - Provide equipment (e.g. balls, nets) and storage that is easy to access
 - Designate outdoor space for specific activities e.g. basketball, volleyball, soccer
 - Provide garden plots or container gardening
- Provide change facilities and equipment for employee use e.g. showers, lockers, benches, mirrors, hair dryers

6.2 Additional Resources

- Stairway to Health
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/index.htm>
- Create a Physical Work Environment to Support Being Active
(Please contact Toronto Public Health at 416.338.7600 for more information of this resource)