

Make Fitness a Workplace Culture

"All parts of the body which have a function, if used in moderation and exercised in labours in which each is accustomed, become thereby healthy, well-developed and age more slowly, but if unused and left idle they become liable to disease, defective in growth, and age quickly."

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine (460-377 BC)

There's no way around it— Hippocrates' words still resonate today, we need to exercise to become healthy and to help maintain our health. Making exercise a life choice is an important element in providing a healthy and productive future. Diet alone cannot provide the benefits of exercise. A routine workout on most days will lower the risk of conditions like diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, hypertension, and cancer; exercise increases strength and balance; physical activity boosts mood and even appears to reduce depression and anxiety; and exercise helps control weight, and improves sleep (Attachment A).¹

In May of each year, the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS) encourages all Americans to make fitness a daily priority. The [President's Challenge](#) is a program that encourages all Americans to make being active part of their everyday lives.⁷ Fortunately, there are a number of workplace strategies that can assist employees in their efforts to get physical. [Healthy Workforce 2010](#) suggests:⁶

- ✓ Sponsor company fitness challenges.
- ✓ Support lunchtime walking/running clubs or company sports team.
- ✓ Create accessible walking trails and/or bike routes.
- ✓ Provide periodic incentive programs to promote physical activity.
- ✓ Offer a health risk appraisal (HRSA) to all employees and follow-up with sedentary employees.
- ✓ Contract with health plans that offer free or reduced-cost memberships to health clubs.
- ✓ Provide clean and safe stairwells and promote their use.
- ✓ Provide facilities for workers to keep bikes secure and provide worksite showers and lockers.
- ✓ Allow flexible work schedules so employees can exercise.
- ✓ Discount health insurance premiums and/or reduce copayments and deductibles in return for an employees participation in specified health promotion or disease prevention programs.

Numerous studies confirm the health benefits of physical activity.² The good news is that people who are inactive can improve their health and well-being. Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve measurable health benefits (Attachment B). For instance, cardiac and

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respiratory fitness can be achieved by increasing the duration, frequency, or intensity of existing physical activity.⁴

Physical inactivity and poor diet are second only to tobacco use as a leading cause of preventable death in the United States.³ Creating an environment of behaviors that build on physical activities is an excellent way for employees to maintain personal health and can translate to a healthier bottom line for the employer. What you, as an employer, need to do is to engage senior leadership; their involvement sets the tone that encourages everyone in the workplace to participate. The bottom line – get physical.

Attachment A: Why Should I be Active?

Active people have lower premature death rates than people who are the least active. Regular physical activity can improve health and reduce the risk of premature death in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of developing coronary heart disease (CHD) and the risk of dying from CHD.
- Reduces the risk of stroke.
- Reduces the risk of having a second heart attack in people who have already had one heart attack.
- Lowers both total blood cholesterol and triglycerides, and increases high-density lipoproteins (HDL or the "good" cholesterol).
- Lowers the risk of developing high blood pressure.
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have hypertension.
- Lowers the risk of developing non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes mellitus.
- Reduces the risk of developing colon cancer.
- Helps people achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety.
- Promotes psychological well-being and reduces feelings of stress.
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling or becoming excessively fatigued.

Attachment B: How Active do Adults Need to be to Gain Some Benefit?¹

Number of Minutes of Activity Required to Burn 150 kcalories

More vigorous physical activities require less of a time duration. Less vigorous physical activities require more time.

0-15 Min	0-20 Min	0-30 Min	0-35 Min	(30-40 Min)	(30-45 Min)	0-45 Min	(45-60 Min)
Stair walking	Basketball	Water aerobics	Walking 1¾ miles (20 min/mile)	Wheeling self in wheelchair	Gardening (standing)	Playing volleyball	Washing windows or floors
Shoveling snow	Wheelchair basketball	Walking 2 miles (15 min/mile)			Playing touch football		Washing and waxing a car or boat
Running 1½ miles (10 minute miles)	Swimming laps	Raking leaves Pushing a stroller 1½ miles					
Jumping rope		Dancing fast (social)					
Bicycling 4 miles		Bicycling 5 miles					
		Shooting basketball					

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/recommendations/adults.htm>

Worksite Resources to Help Get Your Program “Moving”

Healthier Worksite Initiative (HWI)

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/about_us/index.htm

CDC is committed to helping people everywhere become safer and healthier. To this end, CDC developed the Healthier Worksite Initiative (HWI) for its own employees with the vision of making CDC a work site where “healthy choices are easy choices,” and sharing the “lessons learned” with other federal agencies.



Toolkits

Toolkits are timesaving aids that provide customizable turn-key solutions to help program planners plan, implement, and evaluate a specific health promotion intervention. Before implementing any of these interventions, the toolkits should be selected and evaluated based on the identified [needs of your employee population](#).

This section contains toolkits developed by Healthier Worksite Initiative (HWI), designated with , and toolkits available from other sources. The toolkits are divided into the four pillars of the President’s HealthierUS Executive Order and a general category:

- [General Workforce Health Promotion](#)
- [Nutritious Eating](#)
- [Physical Activity](#)
- [Preventive Health Screenings](#)
- [Healthy Choices](#)

HWI offers [guidance on how to use and adapt HWI toolkits for your work place](#).

[Healthy Workforce 2010: An Essential Health Promotion Sourcebook for Employers, Large and Small](#)* (PDF-854k) Uses the objectives of *Healthy Workforce 2010* to explain how and why a company should be involved in health promotion for its employees.

[Corporate - Introducing the President's Challenge to Your Workplace](#)

And making it a success - begins with good planning. Here are a few suggestions for getting your program off to a good start.

- STARTING A PROGRAM
- ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEES
- YOUR ROLE AS ADMINISTRATOR
- TRACKING & AWARDS
- GROUP ADMINISTRATION

References

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