

Workplace Tool Kit

"Walking is moving fast these days. We may think of it as a slow activity, but travel by foot is quickly being recognized as an effective prescription for health, a convenient means of transportation, a great way to meet people, a smart strategy for saving money and a lot of fun."

Jay Walljasper, "On the Commons"

Start a Workplace Walking Program!

Let's walk together whenever we can – safely and responsibly. Workplace walking taps into the power of social support to help us get active and stay active. Let's take short walks during lunch or breaks, one-on-one meet-ups, and longer walks before/after work.

Ask first

Work with your manager and the Human Resources Department to make sure there are no safety, liability, or other special concerns. Seek approval to conduct an informal survey with coworkers. Questions to ask on the survey include:

- Level of interest?
- Schedule preference?
- Distance preference?
- Solo or Social? (Some coworkers will prefer to walk alone, others prefer a walking buddy or walking group.)
- Invite recommendations, questions & concerns

Develop a grass-roots plan

Establish a wellness committee with coworkers who are interested in helping. Cultivate ownership for the program among your co-workers by asking them to share ideas during the planning stage. Ask for input on the program name, structure, and ways to promote it to all of your coworkers. Brainstorm ideas to have fun with walking, whether through walking challenge, special events, awards, celebrations, etc.

Promote the benefits of walking:

Walking regularly leads to better health and greater happiness:

- Helps improve mood and attitude.
- Helps with mental focus.
- Increases energy and ability to complete tasks.
- Reduces the risk of certain diseases and poor health conditions.
- Strengthens bones, increases muscle tone and flexibility.
- Assists with weight loss.

Walking is the perfect exercise for most adults:

- Affordable (Free!)
- Pleasant and easy to do.
- Flexible and can fit into your schedule in lots of little ways every day.
- Great way to spend time with family, friends, neighbors and coworkers.
- Great option for traveling to work or school (good for your waist, wallet and the world!)

Make it real

- Let's encourage each other to develop our own individual walking plan. We're all different – and only we can develop a realistic plan that will work for us.
- We all need to expect set-backs and be flexible with the unexpected illness, family problem, bad weather, work demands that can interfere with a walking plan. We need to expect those challenges and ALWAYS gradually work back to good walking habits!
- Make sure the plan encourages creativity and fun whenever possible.
- Let's commit to the long-term . . . and walk more for the rest of our lives! We'll be glad we did!

Hold a Kickoff Event

Jump-start your walking program with a kickoff celebration. A good time to do this is in conjunction with open enrollment or another company-wide event. Look for creative ways to get employees engaged and excited.

Promote Extra Steps

Encourage employees to take extra steps throughout the day:

- Encourage activities that increase physical activity at work:
 - Exercise Breaks
 - Walking Meetings – Meetings between two or three people can be just as effective on foot . . . get work done and get fit!
- Implement a stairwell initiative -- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator is an excellent way to add steps (and is often just as fast). Post motivational signs available on line: Check-out link: <http://www.letsgo.org/wp-content/uploads/12-WPStairWELLInitiativeTab2-COLOR.pdf>
- Remind coworkers that little decisions every day affect long-term health.

Fun Strategies

Challenge coworkers with fun, creative goals such as:

- A virtual walk across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (400 miles Philadelphia to Erie)
- Celebrate "National Walking Day" the first Wednesday in April – encourage employees to wear their sneakers to work and commit to walking 30 minutes a day.
- Celebrate "National Eating Healthy Day" the first Wednesday in November to raise awareness for the importance of good nutrition and making the best eating decisions.

Evaluate

To earn ongoing leadership support, set up an evaluation process before it begins. Consider desirable outcomes, such as reduced health care costs, participant pre/post feedback, and testimonials from employees. Offer employees the option to track progress with an online or printable tracker to show progress.

Share Success Stories

- Invite employees to share their stories
- Feature success stories in internal (and external) newsletters
- Develop an awards program
- Host a party to celebrate and honor awardees

Join the national walking movement:

Employees at organizations throughout York County are joining the national walking movement, led by *America Walks*. Below is the short list of local organizations that walk together. Some of these organizations walk together frequently, others have special walking events. Let us know if/when we can add your organization's name to the list!

- County of York
- Family First Health
- Glatfelter Insurance Group
- McConkey Insurance
- Memorial Hospital
- United Way of York County
- York County Economic Alliance
- York Traditions Bank

Determine Workplace Walkability

Assessing the walkability of your workplace is an essential step prior to launching a workplace walking program. The following organizations provide information to conduct a walking audit:

- AARP: <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/livable-communities/documents-2016/Walk-Audit-Tool-Kit/AARP-Walk-Audit-Tool-Kit-72216-HR.pdf>
- Centers for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/worksite-pa/pdf/walkability_audit_tool.pdf

Map It!

Secure permission to map out a one-mile route. Post the map(s) in common areas to rally participation. If possible, consider multiple routes for coworkers who:

- have walking limitations;
- seek quiet reflective time in nature;
- want to visit a nearby destination (library, store, restaurant, etc.);
- enjoy competition.

Helpful resources used to create this tool kit:

American Council on Exercise: "Start a Workplace Walking Group"

American Heart Association: Workplace Wellness Program