



# **Increasing Physical Activity**

## **5 Simple Steps to Increase Physical Activity at Work**

**CREATE A  
FITNESS AREA**

**ENCOURAGE  
ACTIVITY  
AT DESKS**

**INCORPORATE  
"BRAIN BOOSTS"**

**START A  
WALKING GROUP**

**ENCOURAGE  
USE OF STAIRS**

Everybody needs at least 60 minutes of moderate to rigorous physical activity—enough to feel your heart pumping and increased breathing—every day. Luckily, we don't need to get all 60 minutes at once. Help employees move more during the workday:

- Create a fitness area or activity room
- Encourage activity at desks/while working
- Incorporate “brain boosts” into meetings
- Start a walking group
- Encourage the use of stairs
- Encourage parking farther away

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

1. Get your company's leadership on board. If they're not already aware, show them the potential [return on investment](#) for employee health programs. Ask them to participate in the effort and be one of your role models.
2. When you're ready to start, encourage your company leader to promote the new policy or program in communications to all employees. [Get sample messages.](#)
3. As you get started, choose one or two policies or programs that make sense for your co-workers and work environment. Don't feel that you must do everything at once.
4. Let the effort evolve over time. Get feedback and refine your approach to ensure that the program or policy remains relevant, feasible and supportive of employees' goals.
5. Regularly share tips, tools and information on healthy habits with your co-workers and their families. Use the tools that work best for your organization: email, company newsletters, intranet, signage, posters, and other tools. [Get ideas.](#)



Photo courtesy of American Structurepoint, Inc.



## CREATE A FITNESS AREA OR ACTIVITY ROOM

Fitness equipment can fit easily in a break area, empty office, or seldom used conference room. Encourage employees to use equipment on breaks, before and/or after work. Equipment possibilities:

- Stationary bike
- Elliptical
- Treadmill
- Mini trampoline
- Resistance bands
- Hand weights

If employees are interested, a nearby yoga studio or fitness center may consider offering a class at your workplace one or two days a week. For example, United Way of Central Indiana offers a weekly yoga class in a conference room during the lunch hour in partnership with the National Institute for Fitness & Sport. Engage employees in planning; you may even discover that you have a certified instructor on staff who is willing to facilitate a group.

Outdoor space can also be utilized. Can you add a sidewalk or landscaped path to connect to a nearby walking trail or pedestrian area? Consider setting up horseshoes, a basketball goal, or even a chin-up bar in an outdoor break area. Survey employees about what they would be most interested in and likely to use.

## ENCOURAGE ACTIVITY WHILE WORKING

Short bursts of physical activity rejuvenate employees, reduce stress, and improve concentration. Make "[Sit for 60, Move for 3](#)" an office mantra, encouraging three minutes of physical activity for every hour of sitting.

Employees can use fitness equipment at their desks:

- standing desks
- exercise/stability balls
- under desk pedal exercisers

While these tools alone don't provide a robust workout, they can contribute to cumulative totals of physical activity, invigorate employees, and help create a culture of wellness.

### Help employees envision other ways to incorporate physical activity into their day:

- Print, distribute, and display [flyers that describe simple activities](#) employees can do almost anywhere.
- Lead by example. Periodically get up and walk to a colleague's desk instead of sending an email. Encourage others to do the same.
- Lap the building a few times per day—mid-morning, mid-afternoon, and before leaving for the day, for example.
- Make small changes to mundane activities—walk to the bathroom or printer that is farthest from your work area, for example.
- Share tips such as those above in staff meetings. Print tips in weekly wellness emails, the company newsletter, intranet, or other existing communication tools.

## INCORPORATE "BRAIN BOOSTS" INTO MEETINGS

"Sit for 60, Move for 3" is a good strategy for meetings also.

- Encourage meeting planners to write movement breaks into agendas. Encourage standing, walking, or stretching during this time.
- Train and encourage managers and other meeting facilitators to lead brain boost activities such as those listed here:
  - **"Favorite Activities"**  
Start by acting out a physical activity that you enjoy, like swimming. Act like you are swimming while saying, "I enjoy swimming." The whole group then acts like they are swimming. While the group "swims," call on a participant, "Mary, what's your favorite activity?" Mary replies with her favorite activity, ("My favorite activity is canoeing,") and demonstrates it. The whole group then acts as if they are canoeing. This continues until everyone has had a chance to share an activity.
  - **"Dance Fever"**  
Call out a type of dance or dance move, and participants do the move. Perform each dance move for 1-3 minutes before calling out the next one. Examples include: the Swim, the Twist, Hand Jive, Macarena, etc.

[Get more ideas.](#)

Post these [Active Meeting Guidelines](#) in conference rooms and meeting areas.



## START A WALKING GROUP

Invite co-workers to meet at a designated time and place to go on a 30-minute walk together. Being active with colleagues promotes teamwork and camaraderie while also reducing stress and improving cognitive functions.

### Walk this way

Inspire participation by sharing these facts when promoting the walking group via email, intranet or other company communications.

Benefits of walking:

- helps lower blood pressure
- boosts energy
- relieves stress
- improves circulation
- helps breathing
- bolsters the immune system
- aids nighttime sleep
- helps prevent osteoporosis
- helps prevent and control diabetes

Make it a walking meeting



Learn how Indiana Health Information Exchange (IHIE), a mid-sized company located along the canal in downtown Indianapolis, launched an employee wellness program from a simple 30-minute "canal walk" twice a week.

## READY FOR MORE?

Jump IN for Healthy Kids works to create healthy environments so that children and families have real opportunities to make healthy choices. We are here to support employers in their efforts to create healthy workplaces. Check out these other great resources:

### [3 Steps to a Healthy Workplace.](#)

Get the overview on how and why to increase healthy eating and physical activity at the workplace and how to teach healthy habits that employees can take home to their families.

### [4 Strategies to Increase Healthy Eating in the Workplace.](#)

Get sample menus, tips for working with caterers, and other ideas for replacing unhealthy meals and snacks with more meaningful rewards.

### [5 Ways to Promote Healthy Habits to Employees and their Families.](#)

Learn how to create a comprehensive communications plan to share wellness resources with employees and their families.

### [Healthy Kids Blog.](#)

Get articles and tips to inspire your wellness initiatives. Reuse our material in your communications plan to teach healthy habits.

## ENCOURAGE USE OF STAIRS, PARKING AWAY FROM BUILDING

Using the stairs and parking farther away from entrances are the two easiest ways to squeeze activity into busy lives.

*In one minute, a 150-lb person burns approximately 10 calories walking up stairs and only 1.5 calories riding an elevator.*

- [Hang encouraging signs](#) on stairwell entrances, landings, and in elevator lobbies. Experiment with [creative inspirational messages](#) such as quotations and music lyrics.
- Place arrows and/or footsteps leading from entrances to stairwells. Encourage employees to escort guests to stairs rather than the elevator.
- Display artwork in stairwells, changing it monthly or seasonally. Feature artwork by employees to entice more traffic.
- Suggest a specific parking area for employees, and document it in the employee handbook.
- Sporadically “catch” employees exhibiting healthy habits—send an email recognizing a driver who parked at the far end of the lot, offer a grocery gift card or company-branded swag as a reward.

**Jump IN for Healthy Kids**

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