

Stride Into Health

A Corporate Walking Program Kit



TUFTS  Health Plan
No one does more to keep you healthy.

Purpose	2
Steps to a Walking Program	3
Plan	4
Implement the program.....	6
Evaluate the outcome.....	7

MATERIALS INCLUDED IN THIS PACKET

Be Active Your Way: A Fact Sheet for Adults
(HealthierUS.gov)

Tips to Help You Get Active
(WIN)

Selecting and Effectively Using a Pedometer
(American College of Sports Medicine)

Walking...A Step in the Right Direction
(National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Walking Log
(Nebraska Office of Women's and Men's Health)

A corporate walking program includes many benefits to both the participants and the employer, including increased morale, decreased stress, and team-building among employees. Walking is an ideal exercise for people of any age and ability and is safe and inexpensive. A walking program does not require a large budget, special equipment, or a fitness center.

This kit will provide tools and information to set up a walking program in your workplace. It will guide you through the various steps and offer examples of various tools and communications for implementation.

Your Tufts Health Plan Account Manager and our Wellness Consultant are available if you need further assistance.

STEPS TO A WALKING PROGRAM

When beginning any wellness program in your workplace, the following tips are a useful guide for successful implementation.

Start on a small scale.

There are many options for a walking program, including a walking route in your building, maps of the surrounding neighborhood, or a full scale walking competition among employees. Depending on the resources available to you, it may be better to start small and build the program based on participation and enthusiasm.

Set specific goals.

If you are clear about what you want to accomplish, it makes planning that much simpler. Define what a successful walking program is, and identify measurable goals (such as participation rates or employee feedback.)

Obtain support from management.

The key to the success of a wellness program is management's support, including ongoing promotion of the initiative and its alignment with corporate goals. For example, success may be challenging if you implement a lunchtime walking program, but your managers tend to work through lunch. Management at all levels should participate and/or encourage employees to take part, and do so by example.

Offer incentives to employees.

Incentives are a good way to encourage participation. Consider all types of incentives from recognition and celebrations for participation to cash or time off.

Measure and Evaluate.

This helps motivate everyone and gives you documented evidence that programs are working. Publicizing participation rates encourages participation (peer pressure) and also shows that management values participation in the program.

Plan

Keeping the tips above in mind, plan for your walking program:

1

Secure Organizational Commitment. It is important that senior management and all managers support the efforts and work to drive participation in the program

2

Create a team or designate a coordinator to organize and plan the program. This person or group is responsible for planning, executing, and evaluating the effort.

- a. Include a member of management and a representative from each department/area
- b. Identify the budget
- c. Set a meeting schedule
- d. Post a sign-up sheet to determine interest, or do a short survey

Set Goals and Objectives. Your goals for your walking program may include:

- Develop social atmosphere, camaraderie, and community spirit among employees
- Increase morale among employees (use PHA data or employee satisfaction surveys)
- Provide a low cost program to improve employee fitness (measure participation)
- Improve employee understanding of the benefits of a physical exercise program

3

Plan the type of walking program to be implemented, such as:

- a. Time limited—for example, a contest based on the number of steps/miles over a specific time period
- b. Ongoing, including:
 - i. Walking routes around the workplace
 - ii. Formation of lunchtime walking clubs
 - iii. Maps of walking routes in the immediate vicinity of the workplace
 - iv. Ongoing contest, tallying results monthly or quarterly.

Try to make the program fun and challenging, not competitive.

Identify leaders for various tasks at the first planning meeting, with deadlines for each task. Choose a name and logo.

- a. **Advertise with posters or visual tools around the workplace**
- b. Identify 3 – 4 enthusiastic employees who would help recruit others
- c. Identify a start date for the program. Allow for enough planning time, but be careful not to roll out a new program at a particularly busy or stressful time for employees (such as early April for an accounting company or during preparation for a certification visit).
- d. Plan a kick off meeting to serve as a Questions and Answers forum. Discuss goals for the group and types of programs to be offered.

Choosing a name/logo for a walking group or program helps to give it an identity within the company, build enthusiasm, and promote the program. Suggestions include: Company X Marathon, Company X Olympics, Go For the Gold, High Steppers, etc.

Have a definite beginning and an end to the program in order to give participants time to re-focus and re-commit. 12 weeks is a reasonable time.

The American Heart Association has designated the first Wednesday of April as National Start! Walking Day. If this is a good time for your company, you can use this to kick off your program. You can access information and tools at americanheart.org.

Implement the Program

1

Publicize the launch of the program with flyers, email, posters, and decorations – try to generate excitement in a way that fits your company’s culture.

Provide a literature packet to each participant with tools and information such as a walking log, information on warming up and cooling down, target heart rates, maps, prize list, etc.

Designate the start day as a casual day – encourage employees to wear sneakers to work. Management participation in this will go a long way.

Flexibility of break and lunch times encourages employee participation.

2

Introduce the program in staff meeting agendas if that is typically how information is shared at your company.

3

Don’t put the entire budget and effort into the launch. It is important to continue encouragement throughout the program, not just at the beginning.

Keep in touch with participants. Assign a leader to orient new participants, keep current participants motivated, and follow up with previous participants.

Recognition helps. Consider prizes at the halfway point of a specific challenge, or monthly prizes or recognition for the walker with the highest number of miles or steps.

Evaluate the Outcome

Once in place for six to twelve months, the program should be evaluated in terms of participation, satisfaction, and if possible, improved productivity and attendance.

1

The type of program will help to determine how you will be able to evaluate the impact.

- a. A specific, time-limited program can be evaluated by participation and results (e.g., the winners in a walking competition, the number of participants, or the overall performance of all participants)
- b. Ongoing programs can be evaluated via an employee survey, or informal reports on participation (seeing employees making use of the walking path, requests for local maps, etc.)

2

You may see results in a health assessment offered to employees, such as an increase in reported exercise habits.

3

Evaluate the results and plan improvements or changes based on the results of the evaluation.