

A GUIDE TO SNEAK IT IN WEEK

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We know that physical activity helps relieve tension and stress. It also improves physical and mental health, immune function, alertness and self-confidence. And studies have shown that having physically active employees has significant positive effects on your business and company. It helps increase productivity and employee satisfaction.

During Sneak It In Week, ParticipACTION encourages Canadians to be more physically active during the workday. Because adult Canadians spend so much time at work, it's a good place to promote physical activity to people who often have little time for leisure activity during the work week. If they can't find ways to be active during their workday, they may not be active at all. So this Sneak It In Week, let's shake things up and get people moving!

Participating in Sneak It In Week is easy – and this guide is full of great information and useful tips to help you engage your workplace in this fun and worthwhile initiative.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please contact Rebecca Jones at ParticipACTION (rjones@participACTION.com).

How does workplace wellness benefit the employer?

A workplace wellness initiative can help a company to:

- Attract and keep employees;
- Reduce the costs of disability, drugs, and absenteeism;
- Reduce the effects of a stressful work place;
- Reduce health costs or keep them contained; and
- Improve morale by creating a happy, supportive environment.

How does workplace wellness benefit employees?

Employees of companies that have a workplace wellness program are likely to have:

- Increased awareness and knowledge of ways to improve their health;
- A better (less stressful) workplace;
- Increased protection from injury;
- Improved health and well-being;
- Higher morale and greater job satisfaction;
- Increased productivity and effectiveness at work;
- Reduced personal health care costs; and
- A more relaxed/flexible approach to health issues.

What can employers do?

1. Provide a supportive environment in the workplace that promotes physical activity. Examples include secure bike racks, shower facilities, safe and accessible stairwells, recommended walking and running routes in the vicinity of the workplace, and gym facilities or discounted gym memberships.
2. Encourage employees to limit extended periods of sitting and to make physical activity part of their day by doing things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, scheduling “walking meetings” with co-workers and using lunch breaks to go for short walks etc.
3. Plan activities that promote physical activity, such as contests and challenge events, stretch breaks, team sports and incorporate physical activity into staff social gatherings.
4. Consider how to create more opportunities for employees to incorporate physical activity into their day. Examples include providing “time in lieu” for overtime worked, allowing flexible work schedules and telecommuting where appropriate.
5. Create a communications plan – send out weekly e-tips and a calendar of events
6. Consider the physical environment – are there spaces that can be designated for physical activity (mats, hand weights, yoga)?
7. Organize stretch breaks in meetings.
8. Build in healthy competition. Department vs. department or region vs. region. And don't forget to include rewards – incentives don't have to be big to be effective. Challenge ideas: Get Moving, Healthy Living Challenge, HSG's Amazing Race, and pedometer challenges.
9. Arrange on-site activity classes including yoga, pilates, relaxation skills, walking groups.
10. Develop a physical fitness policy for the workplace.
11. Ask staff what types of programs they are interested in.
12. Have flexible working hours. Allowing people to arrive at work a little later, or leave a little earlier can help them add activity to their day.
13. Job sharing, telecommuting, and on-site day care will also provide some flexibility to schedules.
14. Allow individuals to take an extra half hour twice a week at lunch to walk, swim, attend fitness class, etc.
15. Encourage people to walk to a co-worker's office or workstation rather than using the telephone or e-mail.
16. Map a 10 minute walking route inside or outside your workplace. Encourage staff to take a mid-morning or afternoon “active” break.
17. Start each workday or shift with a pre-shift stretch program.
18. Provide bike racks (in secure location).
19. Offer on-site fitness facilities, or negotiate discounts to various health clubs in the area.
20. Offer a wide range of company programs, whether it is a walk / bike group or an organized exercise activity (can be just 10 minutes long).
21. Provide resources and education - newsletters, bulletins, community guides, health fairs, guest speakers, etc.
22. Help staff to find a support group or buddy system to encourage each other.
23. Identify walking routes – set up walking groups
24. Create a physical activity closet that is accessible to all staff. Here are some inexpensive items to keep in it:



Useful resources:

PAVING THE WAY – a Workplace Walking Resource (British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association) <http://walkbc.ca/walk-programs/workplace-walking>

Workplace Physical Activity: Got 10 Minutes? (ParticipACTION)
http://www.participaction.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/lifestyle_tips_eng_0413.pdf

Start a workplace walking group (ParticipACTION)
<http://www.participaction.com/start-a-workplace-walking-group/>

Workout at Work (Washington Post)
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/health/workout-at-work/>

Five great reasons to leave your desk at lunch (ParticipACTION)
<http://www.participaction.com/five-great-reasons-to-leave-your-desk-at-lunch/>

Five simple ways to incorporate wellness into your workday (ParticipACTION)
<http://www.participaction.com/five-simple-ways-to-incorporate-wellness-into-your-workday/>

