

Why Encourage your Staff to Walk?

There are benefits to both employers and employees from encouraging staff to walk more. Given the amount of time people spend at work, and our increasingly sedentary lives, it makes sense to think about the opportunities for increasing physical activity in and around the workplace.

This toolkit offers information on:

- 1) **The business case for prompting walking;**
- 2) **Benefits of walking more;**
- 3) **Case study; and**
- 4) **Further information**

1) The business case

Recent studies have shown that a lack of exercise in employees results in increased absenteeism through ill-health, and reduced productivity. Evidence also suggests that physical activity can benefit an organisation. You can use the following statistics ([British Heart Foundation](#)) in your business case to managers.

- Physically active employees take 27% less sick days than non-active employees.
- This equates to over two days' improved attendance and savings of £135 per employee.
- Studies have shown that individual work performance can be improved by between 4% and 15% when people engage in regular physical activity.
- An on-site fitness programme can reduce staff turnover by between 8% and 13%.

There are also a range of other benefits associated with reducing the number of people driving alone which are outlined in the [car park management toolkit](#).

Walking is a cheap and easy way to promote better health and wellbeing to colleagues and ideal for people of all ages and fitness levels who want to be more active. Workplace walking can also be a sociable activity that has the added value of providing an opportunity to network with colleagues and improve communication and interaction.

There is a lot of research and evidence to prove that physical activity interventions in the workplace, such as a lunch time walking group, lead to better employee health, reduced absenteeism, improved moral, productivity and reduced stress levels. More information on this can be found at [Physical activity in the workplace](#).

2) Benefits of walking more

The lack of movement in our sedentary lives is regularly in the news. Most recently, a new risk category of 'actively sedentary' people has been identified – people who partake in exercise frequently but are still at risk of the negative impacts of sedentary behaviour on health, particularly though sitting at work.

Actively sedentary is a new category of people who are active for one hour but sitting around the rest of the day. A [large study](#) involving over 100,000 U.S. adults found that those who sat for more than six hours a day had up to a 40 percent greater risk of death over the next 15 years than those who sat for less than three hours a day. Most importantly, this effect occurred regardless of whether the participants exercised.

The study showed that prolonged sitting cancels out the effects of exercise in otherwise active people, with two hours of sitting cancelling out 20 minutes of exercise.

Everyone can benefit from moving more at work, with the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognising the importance of the workplace as a setting to promote healthy lifestyle practices. Regular walking has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic illnesses, such as; heart disease, type-two diabetes, asthma, stroke and some cancers. Other benefits include:

- Exposure to daylight, setting your body clock for the day, and giving yourself a dose of Vitamin D.
- Giving your eyes a long distance workout (a vital antidote to desk-based work).
- Beat the 3pm slump with a lunchtime walk. A brisk walk is a natural energiser; boosting circulation and increasing the oxygen supply to cells in your body, helping you feel more alert and alive.
- Improving your mood – The ability of exercise to boost mood is undisputed. Studies have shown regular, moderate-intensity exercise to be as effective as anti-depressants in cases of mild to moderate depression.

Encouraging workers to contribute to the success of workplace walking activities by volunteering as walk leaders can build leadership skills. Try and get these skills acknowledged in personal development reviews and training records.

3. Case study

Kam Marwaha

“In May 2011, at 14st and a size 16 (I’m 5ft 7), I started walking to work to train for a charity walk that my sister, Preety, had asked me to do with her. Going from doing no exercise to walking three to six miles a day was tough, but quickly got easier – especially when I got a pair of comfy trainers! And the motivation of not being late for work meant I walked very fast but, actually, I didn’t sweat a lot or need a shower at the office.

I enjoyed walking to work down the River Thames, it was calming compared to being on a packed bus and the walk took the same time as the bus did in rush hour. I also started walking for an hour at weekends, or heading to the countryside with my boyfriend James and trekking leisurely for two hours. In three months, I’d lost 1 and a ½ stones in weight. By Christmas 2011, I’d lost another 2st and fitted into a size 10-12. I’ve also changed jobs and have a six-mile walk each way, which takes 1 and ¼ hours, but I love it. And I’ve since lost another 1 and a ½ stones, bringing my weight down to 10 stone.”

Source: <http://www.closeronline.co.uk/2013/01/drop-a-dress-size-in-just-six-weeks-by-walking-yourself-fit>



4. For further Information, see these Cheshire East Travel Toolkits:

- [Workplace Facilities and Initiatives for Walking](#)
- [Promoting Walking](#)
- [Workplace Walking Challenges](#)