

06B PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Key questions to ask

- Why should I promote physical activity in my workplace?
- What can I do to promote physical activity in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can encourage your employees to become more physically active.



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WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

Physical activity is defined as 'any sustained body movement that uses energy'.¹ It is widely recognised that the benefits of physical activity include good physical and mental health, the achievement and maintenance of a healthy weight, and improved overall health and wellbeing.

To find out more about the benefits of physical activity, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Benefits of physical activity

In Australia, it is estimated that 10 million people spend an average of eight hours per day in their workplace.⁵ It is also known that an increasing number of people have jobs that involve many hours of sitting. This results in fewer opportunities for many people to be physically active during working hours.

A survey of Australian employees conducted by Medibank Private found that 10% of workers are completely inactive, 40% only participate in minimal physical activity and 12% participate in less than one hour of physical activity per week.⁶

To find out how much physical activity is good for you, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



How much physical activity?

There is a range of evidence to support the development of a physical activity element in your workplace health and wellbeing program.

Research shows that valuable programs include those that motivate individual employees, and those that provide rewards for improved health habits and lifestyles.⁷

Physical activity fast facts

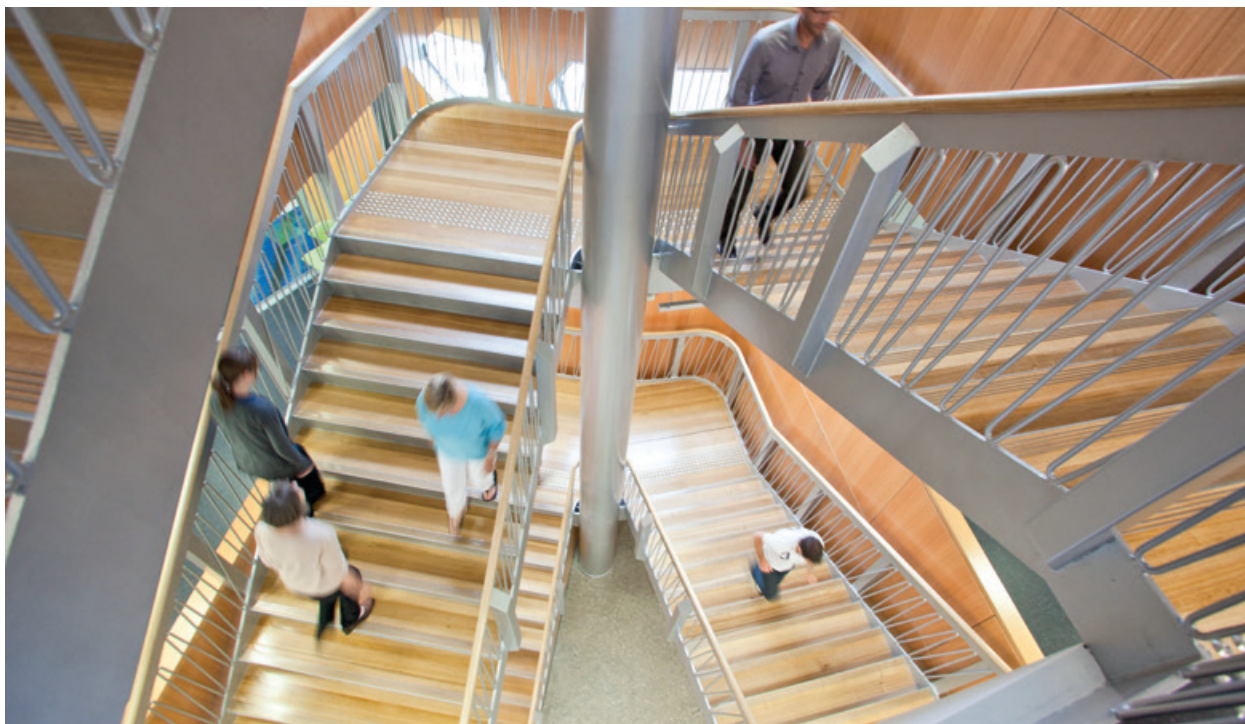
- The Australian Health Survey 2011-2012 showed that 69.4% of Tasmanians aged 18+ were classified as being inactive or having low activity levels.²
- Physical inactivity is identified as the fourth leading risk factor for mortality. Physical inactivity contributes to three of the other top five risk factors including high blood pressure, high blood glucose levels, and being overweight or obese.³
- Physical inactivity contributes to 6.6% of the overall health burden in Australia, in terms of the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death. Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the health sector \$672 million each year with a further \$1135 million lost in production and leisure.⁴

Some of the physical activity strategies that have been found to be most effective in workplaces include using prompts to encourage stair use, ensuring access to places or opportunities for physical activity, and providing education or peer support. Supporting employees with individual behavioural skills training has also been found to be a good way to increase physical activity, improve nutrition or both.⁸



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WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?



Physical activity and employee safety

The benefits of being physically active outweigh the potential risks people may encounter when participating in physical activity. However, it is always important to be aware of general safety when encouraging your employees to increase their physical activity.

For more information on this topic, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



FACT SHEET

Physical activity and employee safety

This fact sheet provides some standard information in relation to safety screening questionnaires, correct equipment, warm-ups, cool-downs and the effect of different climate conditions.



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WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

There are many ways that you can encourage employees to participate in physical activity and be active in as many ways as possible.

For more information on physical activity in the workplace, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Active transport

Active transport is any physical activity that is undertaken as a means of transport and not solely as a recreational activity.⁹ This fact sheet covers the benefits of active transport and tips on how to incorporate active transport into your work day.



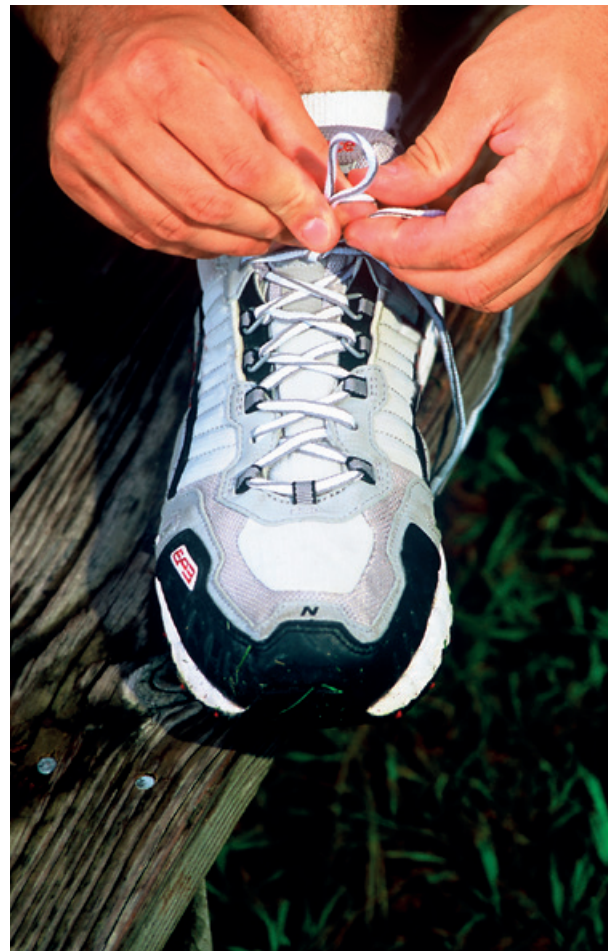
Active meetings and events

This fact sheet outlines how to prepare for and conduct active meetings and events in your workplace.



Physical activity policy











In some workplaces, having a policy around physical activity is important. This template will help you develop a physical activity policy for your workplace.






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WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

The following table lists examples of strategies and activities that may be useful to encourage physical activity in the workplace. Remember, aim for a mix of activities that target people, place and policy.

	Examples of activities targeting active transport	People	Place	Policy
	Map and promote walking and public transport routes close to your workplace		✓	
	Encourage and support employees to use active transport strategies, such as getting off the bus several stops earlier or parking the car further away		✓	
	Provide a bike or bike fleet for employees to attend local meetings		✓	
	Establish a bicycle user group	✓		
	Provide a secure bike storage area in a safe, convenient and accessible location		✓	
	Provide tickets for employees to attend meetings via public transport		✓	
	Provide weather protection gear to allow employees to walk to local meetings (e.g. umbrella, spray jacket, sunscreen)		✓	
	Provide facilities such as showers and change rooms so that employees can actively travel to and from work, and participate in physical activity in their lunch breaks		✓	
	Develop a plan that encourages active transport to and from work			✓
	Consider the local environment around the workplace in terms of safety, security, lighting and footpaths. Liaise with your local council to discuss suitable areas for physical activity		✓	

	Examples of activities targeting employee information and education	People	Place	Policy
	Provide information to employees on types of physical activity and how much physical activity is required for health benefits, as outlined by the Australian Government and the World Health Organisation	✓		
	Encourage employees to participate in government health campaigns and services, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Swap It, Don't Stop It www.swapit.gov.au ■ Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service® www.gethealthy.tas.gov.au 	✓		
	Set up a central point for displaying physical activity information, such as a noticeboard in the tearoom or information on payslips	✓		



This symbol indicates an easy or low-resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



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WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

	Examples of activities targeting employer support opportunities	People	Place	Policy
👍	Offer flexible working hours to provide employees with opportunities for physical activity before work, after work and in lunch breaks			✓
👍	Support mini physical activity breaks during work hours, such as stretching and/or short walks			✓
👍	Include a 'stretch break' on meeting agendas			✓
👍	Allow employees to hold 'walking meetings' and/or take short physical activity breaks if they have desk-based jobs			✓
👍	Post signs at lifts and escalators to encourage the use of stairs, and develop supporting internal communications (e.g. Find Thirty Every Day www.findthirtytas.gov.au campaign and point-of-decision prompts)		✓	
👍	Liaise with local fitness centres to obtain discounted rates or memberships	✓		
👍	Organise user pays on-site fitness classes	✓		
👍+	Start a lunch time walking group or exercise group	✓		
👍+	Provide employees with pedometers or subsidised entry to a pedometer challenge	✓		
👍+	Set up a pedometer loan scheme	✓		
👍+	Encourage employee challenges or competitions using pedometers, such as the Global Corporate Challenge www.gettheworldmoving.com or 10 000 Steps www.10000steps.org.au challenge	✓		
👍+	Establish partnerships with local bike shops to provide corporate rates to employees	✓		
👍+	Provide subsidised membership at local fitness centres or aquatic centres		✓	
👍+	Provide subsidised on-site fitness classes	✓		
👍+	Provide on-site exercise facilities, for example, multi-purpose recreational rooms for group exercise classes or gyms		✓	
👍+	Provide incentives and rewards for increased physical activity, such as free gym passes or pedometers	✓		

	Examples of activities targeting employees with specific needs	People	Place	Policy
👍+	Support employees considered 'at-risk' (e.g. those overweight, with high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes) to increase their physical activity levels by participating in programs such as the Get Active Program www.wsrt.org.au/get-active-program or the Get Healthy Coaching and Information Service® www.getthehealthytas.gov.au	✓		
👍+	Support employees with a disability to participate in physical activity. Promote implementation of the <i>Sport and Recreation Tasmania Framework for People with a Disability</i> http://www.sportandrecreation.tas.gov.au/sportrectas/publications/sport_and_recreation_framework_for_people_with_a_disability			✓



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WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?



	Examples of activities utilising external support	People	Place	Policy
	Promote physical activity opportunities outside the workplace, such as local walking groups	✓		
	Connect with programs in local communities, for example, Active Launceston www.activelaunceston.com.au and the Get Active Program www.wsrt.org.au/get-active-program	✓		
	Promote local, state and national physical activity and/or active transport events, such as Walk to Work Day www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp and Ride to Work Day www.ride2work.com.au/general/ride-to-work		✓	
	Provide support for employees to enter fun runs or walking events as individuals or as a workplace team	✓		
	Provide support and encouragement for organisation sport teams	✓		
	Have an exercise physiologist attend and perform simple fitness tests on site	✓		
	Host on-site visits from specialists such as exercise physiologists or fitness experts to talk about physical activity ideas and benefits and to demonstrate safe exercises in the workplace	✓		
	Have a fitness instructor lead employee walking, jogging and/or running groups	✓		



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HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

The best way to find out if your physical activity initiatives have been a success is to look at the impact of any changes you have made in your organisation. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- the number of employees who are currently physically active
- how often employees participate in physical activity
- the number of employees who use active transport to/from work
- how many steps per day employees take while at work
- what might stop employees participating in more physical activity
- a facilities assessment of your workplace (e.g. number of bike racks available, availability of standing workstations, showers and point-of-decision signage).

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and objectives. For example, there is no need to measure employees' stair usage if stairwells are inaccessible.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the results are different. Then you will be able to determine if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your initiatives to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your physical activity policy (if you have one)?
 - Are employees aware of the policy and its requirements?
 - Is there staff support for the policy?
 - Does your point-of-decision signage get your message across (e.g. do you have the right number and type of signs, and are they are still in place and legible)?

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
 - What is the level of employee participation in the program initiatives offered?
 - How many employees have participated in the physical activity initiatives offered?
 - Is it always the same employees involved or is the program reaching a range of people?
- Can you see that employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
 - Is there evidence of employees using the facilities provided (e.g. bike racks, stairwells)?
 - What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they will comply with its requirements?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
 - Has the percentage of employees participating in physical activity changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
 - Has the average intensity and/or duration of physical activity of employees changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
 - Are employees aware of physical activity signage/noticeboard information and does it influence their behaviour?
 - Has employees' knowledge or awareness of physical activity changed?
 - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, observations, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcover.tas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



A simple guide to evaluation



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HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

Devonport City Council, Tasmania

Launched in 2009, Devonport City Council's Health and Wellbeing Program was developed in conjunction with staff, management and students from nearby Reece High School. The program aims to make the Council more attractive to potential employees, and increase productivity and improve staff retention.

The program initially used a staff survey to identify issues and potential initiatives. One of the identified issues was inadequate physical activity by employees. As a result of this, following a proposal put together by two employees, the Council implemented a Workplace Bike Program.

Two bicycles were purchased for staff to use in place of a work car. These were used to attend off-site meetings, undertake field work, site visits or technical inspections and to run errands. The bikes were also available for personal use, including during lunch breaks, before and after work.

The program was specifically tailored to indoor-based employees, with a team of four staff working on implementation. Documentation developed for the project included log books, a map with recommended riding boundaries, maintenance check logs, defect tags, riding and safety tips, a safety induction program, membership application form and a pre-ride preparation checklist.

The two key organisers undertook Intermediate Cycling training through Cycling South, Tasmania's peak cycling body. This reinforced the Council's commitment to the program, and added professionalism and credibility to the induction process. It also provided an opportunity to refine documentation and processes based on best-practice training and advice prior to a roll out to all staff. The development and planning phase took less than three months.

The program is integrated with the Council's workplace incident system, with any incidents involving the bikes (including near misses) being reported.



Employees wishing to use the work bikes go through an induction process, which includes a basic riding skills test and rudimentary training. Regular maintenance checks are carried out to ensure the bikes are safe, and risk management audits ensure that program guidelines are being upheld.

A further benefit of the Workplace Bike Program is that employees who do not have a vehicle licence now have a means of transport for work purposes. Devonport City Council has a number of employees for whom this is of interest.

The aims of the Devonport City Council Workplace Bike Program are to:

- promote healthy lifestyles and the benefits of cycling
- provide quick, convenient and efficient transport for work-related trips
- save on fuel and other motor vehicle running costs
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions, road congestion and pollution



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HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

- demonstrate to the community that Council is serious about sustainable transport and reducing its carbon footprint
- enable staff to be more active at work
- provide leadership to the community on the importance of being active and looking for alternate options to using a motor vehicle.

The second anniversary of the initiative was marked on 1 February 2012. During those two years, staff made 289 trips, travelling a distance of 2140 kilometres. To date, 19 inductions have been completed.

A number of benefits of the Workplace Bike Program have been identified as follows:

- Technical staff can use the bikes for inspections and GPS pick-up in areas without vehicular access, such as parks and reserves. With staff using shared footpaths to reach their destinations the initiative is also allowing earlier detection of hazards and other maintenance issues on these community assets.
- With many Council staff having previously expressed their concern at using motor vehicles for short trips, the program has provided a more environmentally conscious option, allowing them to carry out work knowing that they are actively reducing carbon emissions. Council fuel saving through using bikes (around 50 cents per km) is also contributing to a staff sense of directly reducing the Council's carbon footprint and energy expenditure.
- With high demand making Council pool vehicles frequently unavailable, having two bikes available for short-trip use has assisted employees to complete important work tasks even when no vehicle has been available.
- Travelling on bikes has allowed for greater connection and interaction with the community and has enhanced liveability and social health. It is hoped the example being set by Council employees will encourage other local organisations and the community to adopt similar programs and initiatives.

- By reducing vehicle use through cycling rather than driving, the Council has benefited from reduced wear and tear on vehicles, savings in fuel and reduced vehicle running costs.
- There are also numerous environmental benefits such as reducing air pollution, reduced carbon emissions and a direct contribution to a more sustainable community. These returns on investment are difficult to calculate but are nevertheless important benefits of the program.

The program has seen a new awareness amongst staff of the importance of being active and doing regular exercise, as they see their colleagues going out on the bikes and coming back invigorated. One staff member who did not own a bike purchased one after joining the program and started cycling as a new hobby. Often, participants in the program comment that they feel better after cycling and that they are more alert when they return to their computer work.

More stories are needed!

The Premier's Physical Activity Council is seeking stories from individuals, organisations and community groups about people participating in regular physical activity and how it has made a difference to their enjoyment of life.

Tasmanians are invited to submit stories in text, images, video, audio and other art forms, by either uploading them onto an interactive website, or posting them in to be uploaded.

For more information, visit the Get Moving Tasmania website at www.getmoving.tas.gov.au



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WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can help you access specific information related to physical activity.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from the *Good health. Good business.* website at www.workcovertas.gov.au/goodhealthgoodbusiness



Where to go for more information - Physical activity



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