

# Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

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## Purpose

To learn how to make active living and healthy eating a part of one's lifestyle

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## Intended Audience

All employees

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## Suggested Activities

- Start a walking club during lunch breaks; give rewards to those who attend on a regular basis.
- Share information with employees about the Heart&Stroke *Walkabout*<sup>™</sup> initiative. Visit [www.walkaboutns.ca/about.aspx](http://www.walkaboutns.ca/about.aspx) for more information.
- Log onto [www.trails.gov.ns.ca](http://www.trails.gov.ns.ca) to make and post a list of shared-use trails in your area that employees can use.
- Encourage employees to take 5- to 10-minute stretch breaks during their regular work breaks and in meetings—alone or in groups.
- Set up a “challenge.” Ask participants to increase their activity to the recommended 30–60 minutes on most days of the week while following the guidelines outlined in *Canada's Physical Activity Guide* and *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Have participants record their food/beverage intake and physical activity for a specified time period (e.g., one month). Give a reward (e.g., water bottle, pedometer, sport store gift certificate) to participants who meet the challenge.
- Start a Stairway to Health program. It's fun and easy, and everything you need to get started can be found at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/) (Canadian Health Network).
- Encourage employees to take the S.M.A.R.T. (Stretch, Move, Add it up, Reduce Strain, Talk to a physiotherapist) approach to mobility by logging on to [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca) for more information. There is also a mobility quiz on this site.
- Various departments across Nova Scotia government have arranged healthy workplace related competitions. Go to What's New section of [www.gov.ns.ca/psc/healthyworkplace](http://www.gov.ns.ca/psc/healthyworkplace) for a brief description of those competitions.

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## Materials

- Diversity Checklist
- *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*  
(See sleeve inserts at the back of this binder. To order multiple copies, go to [www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.ca/foodguide) or call 1-866-225-0709 and ask for Publications. Allow four to six weeks for delivery.)
- *Canada's Physical Activity Guide*  
(See sleeve inserts at the back of this binder. To order multiple copies, go to [www.paguide.com](http://www.paguide.com) or call 1-866-225-0709 and ask for Publications. Allow four to six weeks for delivery.)
- *Making the Most of You* (for tracking progress)  
(Order from [www.dairygoodness.ca](http://www.dairygoodness.ca) or call 1-800-465-COWS. Allow two to four weeks for delivery.)
- Information sheets: *Stairway to Health Program*  
(Public Health Agency of Canada) (See p. 191)
- Fact sheet: *Walking ... Taking the Smart Step!*  
(Canadian Physiotherapy Association) (See p. 197)
- *Healthy Eating in the Workplace Action Plan Worksheet*  
(See Additional Resources, p. 221)
- *Healthy Eating in the Workplace Participant Evaluation Form*  
(See Additional Resources, p. 225)

# Getting Started

- Quick Start- Ready, Set, GO! - Some workplaces have long standing and established physical activity programs for their employees. If your employer understands the benefits of physical activity and supports employees in improving their health through regular physical activity, it is likely you are ready to go with Stairway to Health as a simple add-on to your existing program.
- Convincing Your Employer - Strategies to get the boss on board, and on the stairs.
- Convincing your Property Manager - Strategies to gain the support of your building management for your Stairway to Health program.
- Hire a Student - Need help getting started? Students in College and University Physical Education, Recreation and Kinesiology programs can be a great resource.

**This page can be found at:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/gettingstarted.htm>

# Ideas to Encourage Stair Use

- Involve Senior Management- ie. meet the CEO on the stairway
- Involve Property Managers
- Set-up a Stairway to Health Committee to guide the initiative and encourage participation- engage different kinds of champions and champion networks within the workplace to promote stair use as the norm not the exception
- Prompt individuals to take the stairs- Use point of choice signage (eg. 'take the stairs' signs beside elevators); have security guards/information kiosks point people to the stairs as an option; develop permanent signage indicating where the stairs are located
- Incorporate Stairway to Health Interactive Tools into your programming - encourage stair use by having individuals or groups virtually climb mountains and towers
- Increase the attractiveness of the Stairway
- Offer incentives -prizes, recognition, awards to those who participate
- Organize events to launch the program, maintain participation or encourage on-going use
- Market stair climbing as a way to burn calories, improve health and increase the level of physical activity
- Involve external experts- provide presentations (eg. fire marshall to give presentation on not locking doors, health practitioner to give presentation on the health benefits, etc.)
- Address safety concerns- injury prevention, lighting, etc.

**This page can be found at:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/increasestairuse.htm>

# Benefits of Stairway to Health programs

There are a variety of benefits to programs that encourage the use of stairways, as part of physical activity in workplaces, or other settings. These benefits may include improved morale, a sense of well-being, higher energy levels and improved team building. Below are the measurable benefits that are indicated in research on stair use.

- Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that Canadians accumulate 30-60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day.
- Stair climbing is possible in many workplaces and requires no special equipment in order to participate.
- There is evidence to suggest that moderate intensity lifestyle activities like taking the stairs may be more successfully promoted than structured vigorous intensity exercise programs (Kerr, 2001).
- Stair climbing can be accumulated across the course of the day, making a significant contribution to 30 minutes of daily physical activity (Kerr, 2001).
- Stair climbing interventions typically result in a 6-15% increase in use of stairs.
- A significantly lower risk of mortality is indicated in studies where participants climbed more than 55 flights per week. (Paffenbarger et al. 1993).
- Stair climbing requires about 8-11kcal of energy per minute, which is high compared to other physical activities (Edwards, 1983).
- Active Stair climbers are more fit and have a higher aerobic capacity (Ilmarinen et al, 1978).
- Even two flights of stairs climbed per day can lead to 2.7 kg weight loss over one year (Brownell, Stunkard, and ALbaum, 1980).
- There is a strong association between stair climbing and bone density, in post-menopausal women (Coupland et al. 1999).
- Stair climbing programs can improve the amount of 'good cholesterol' in the blood - HDL concentrations (Wallace and Neill, 2000).
- Stair climbing increases leg power and may be an important priority in reducing the risk of injury from falls in the elderly (Allied Dunbar Survey, 1992).
- Because stair climbing rates are currently very low, increasing population levels of stair climbing could lead to substantial public health dividends (Kerr, 2001).
- Because stair climbing is an activity with which we are all familiar, participants have a high level of confidence in their ability to participate in the activity (Kerr, 2001).

You may have observed other benefits of your Stairway to Health program. Let us know by sharing your success story.

**This page can be found at:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/benefits.htm>

# Barriers to Developing a Stairway to Health Program

- **Cost:** a stairway to health program can be built on any kind of budget. Have a look at some examples in the costing out your program section and use the budget template to determine specifics.
- **Motivation:** Some people would rather take the elevator or escalator than the stairs. Have a look at the fact sheets under the motivating your employees section for ideas on how to get them climbing.
- **Unattractiveness of Stairwells:** making your stairwell more attractive is one of the easiest ways to encourage stair use. Have a look at the design considerations and ideas to increase stair use fact sheets for a host of ideas to increase the attractiveness of your stairway.
- **Locked Stairwells:** many workplaces have locked stairways that are not available to employees or are only accessible by key access cards. If this is the case in your workplace plan to work with your employer and property manager around possible solutions. Have a look at the convincing your employer and convincing your property manager sections for ideas on how to set up a meeting and prepare your presentation. You might also want to have a look at the fire and building codes for stairways section for information on codes that apply.
- **Lack of Employer Support:** have a look at the convincing your employer section for ideas on how the get your employer on board.
- **Lack of Property Manager Support:** have a look at the convincing your employer section for ideas on how the get your property manager involved.
- **Safety:** have a look at the fact sheets under the safety considerations section for ideas on how to overcome personal safety and injury prevention issues.
- **No real Health Benefits:** some people feel that climbing the stairs has no tangible health benefits, but this is certainly not the case. Have a look at the benefits fact sheet for some ideas or have employees calculate the calories they burn by using the calorie calculator.

**This page can be found at:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/barriers.htm>

## Using Point of Choice Signage

Point of choice signage prompts individuals to take the stairs by placing signage next to elevator buttons, next to staircases or beside escalators exactly where individuals will make the choice. Point of choice signage has been proven as the most effective way to increase stair use based on the research and is an easy, sustainable way to increase regular physical activity in the workplace. Below please find some ideas on how to use Point of Choice signage to effectively increase stair use among employees.

### **1. Download Point of Choice Posters**

To assist coordinators, a series of downloadable PDF posters have been developed. Please click here for a menu of the posters available. Plan to download, print and post next to elevators, escalators, information kiosks or stairway entrances- anywhere individuals will be making the choice to take the stairs.

### **2. Affix Permanent or Temporary Signage**

Whether you are using Point of Choice signage temporarily for an event or permanently installing it beside elevator buttons, you will want to make sure that the signs are prominently displayed and durable (laminating is a good option). For the best result, affix signage next to elevator buttons, at the entrance to stairwells and at the base of escalators. Using directional signage is also important to direct people to where the stairs are located. Consider adding arrows to point of choice signage to direct individuals to the nearest stairwell.

### **3. Obtain Permission Prior to Posting Signage**

Posting signage in your building may not be an easy task, whether it be temporary or permanent. To ensure things run smoothly, be sure to discuss your plans with Property Managers or Employers prior to posting. For tips on how to 'sell' the idea, please see Convincing Your Employer and Convincing Your Property Manager.

### **4. Market Your Stairway to Health Initiative**

After your signage is in place, send an email to let employees know about your initiative and encourage them to register their stair climbing activity on the Stairway to Health website.

### **5. Plan a Stairway to Health Event**

Events are a great way to raise awareness of a new initiative. For more ideas on planning a Stairway to Health event please see the Event Planning Fact Sheet.

### **6. Capitalize on the Poster White Space**

Use the 'white space' provided on the posters to advertise an event or draw arrows that direct people to the nearest staircase. This space provides an opportunity to personalize your Stairway to Health initiative.

### **7. Tell us Your Story**

Let us know about your Stairway to Health initiative by submitting your success story on the Stairway to Health website. Your story will help us keep track of Stairway to Health activities and increase our knowledge on the impact of different approaches.

**This page can be found at:**

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/usingpocsignage.htm>







## WALKING... TAKE THE S.M.A.R.T. STEP!

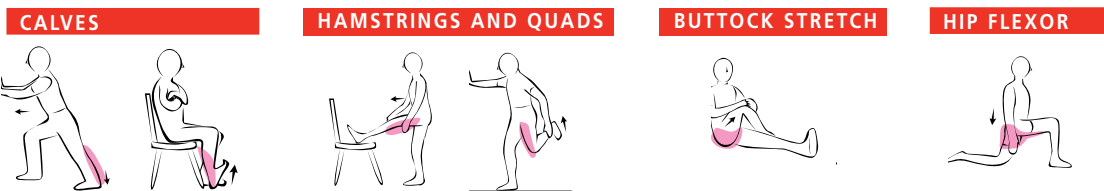
Walking is one of the healthiest activities you can choose to help you maintain and gain physical mobility. Taking a **S.M.A.R.T.** approach (**Stretch, Move, Add it up, Reduce Strain, Talk to a physiotherapist**) to your mobility will also enhance your enjoyment of this physical activity, whether you're just beginning to get out and walk or trying to gain more from your walking program.

The following S.M.A.R.T. tips for walking have been prepared for you by the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) to help you get the most enjoyment out of a healthy and active walking season.

### STRETCH – BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ACTIVITY

Stretching – as a warm-up, a break during repetitive movement, and a cool-down after your walk – helps you to move easily, keeps your muscles flexible and relaxed, your joints mobile, and relieves tension and strain.

A warm up before walking helps reduce the potential for muscle strain, injury and fatigue. Start out slowly on your route until you feel warm. Then take a few minutes to do the following stretches, and repeat them again at the end of your walk. On longer walks, it may be a good idea to stop and stretch at the mid-way point.



#### When stretching, remember:

- Movements should be slow and controlled to the point where you feel a gentle pull of the muscle. If this pull lessens, stretch a little more. It should never be painful;
- Once you feel a stretch, hold the position for 15-20 seconds. Do not bounce or jerk;
- Repeat each stretch three times in the same direction; repeat for the opposite side.

### MOVE – TODAY FOR TOMORROW

Get moving. Keep moving. Stay moving. Through the seasons. Through life. “Just putting one foot in front of the other . . .” makes walking one of the easiest activities to incorporate into your daily and exercise routine.

- **Breathing:** Before starting out, relax and take a deep breath, which fills the lungs and moves them into their most efficient position. After you exhale, maintain the chest in this position, with shoulders down and slightly back. Throughout your walk, your speed should still allow you to carry on a conversation.
- **Arms:** Start with your arms hanging by your sides, loose and relaxed from your shoulders to your fingers. As you warm up, begin swinging the full length of your arms gently in keeping with your stride. You can get more of a work-out from your walking program by more vigorous arm movement or by swinging arms that are bent at a 90-degree angle. Remember to ease off and finish the walk with the same gentle, relaxed arm movements you began with.

...more

**S** This information sheet is part of the CPA's **S.M.A.R.T.** approach to your mobility (focusing on **Stretching, Moving, Adding it up, Reducing Strain** and **Talking to a physiotherapist**). The information provided is intended for general use and is not meant to substitute for the professional, personal assessment your physiotherapist offers.

**1** Cette fiche de renseignements fait partie du programme de l'ACP « **cinq points** pour assurer votre liberté de mouvement » (**1. Étirez-vous; 2. Bougez; 3. Ajoutez les minutes; 4. Réduisez la fatigue; 5. Consultez un physiothérapeute**). Ces renseignements sont fournis à titre général seulement et ne prétendent pas remplacer l'évaluation professionnelle, personnalisée offerte par votre physiothérapeute.

[www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca)



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canadienne de  
physiothérapie



## cont'd: WALKING... TAKE THE S.M.A.R.T. STEP

### ADD IT UP – AN HOUR IS POWER

To *gain* mobility, plan activities throughout your day that keep you moving for periods of at least 10 minutes. To *maintain* your mobility, make every movement count. Add up all you do in a day and aim for a minimum of 60 minutes of *movement* every day. For maximum benefit, physiotherapists recommend regular physical activity and stretching to maintain your physical mobility throughout the year.

- **Pace yourself!** Start your walking season slowly if you haven't been active over the winter. Take time to recover between longer outings – keep walking, but for shorter distances or at slower speeds;
- **With proper clothing and footwear**, you can plan your walks 12 months of the year.

### REDUCE STRAIN – USE GEAR THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Walking shoes, waist pouches, backpacks, etc., are meant to ease the load, not cause additional strain. Take measures to fit your gear to *you*, not you to your gear.

- Shop around for the right shoe. Your physiotherapist can make suggestions of what to look for in a walking shoe that best suits your needs and walking program;
- Replace old shoes. The average life of a walking shoe is approximately 400 to 600 miles (620 to 800 km);
- Monitor your posture and body mechanics. Make sure your head, shoulders and hips are lined up over your feet for a good walking posture;
- Keep your stride comfortable. Too long a stride makes for “overstride” - muscles tighten up and tire before your walk is done;
- Plan your walk route for your comfort (fairly flat for beginners, low hills for intermediate and steeper inclines for advanced);
- Walk the same route every other day. Rotate routes (from incline to flat, sidewalk to grass) to keep things interesting and to avoid over-use injuries;
- **Don't** use wrist or ankle weights while walking as they put too much added stress on your joints.

### TALK TO A PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Physiotherapists are healthcare professionals who help people of all ages and lifestyles gain and maintain their desired level of active living and physical mobility. With their applied knowledge and understanding of the human body in action, physiotherapists are able to help you to increase your mobility, relieve pain, build strength and improve balance and cardiovascular function. Physiotherapists not only treat injuries, they also teach you how to prevent the onset of pain or injury that can limit your activity.

### How do I find a physiotherapist?

Finding a physiotherapist may vary from province to province. Here are some suggestions:

- Check the yellow pages of your local telephone book for listings of physiotherapists and physiotherapy clinics. You can make an appointment with a physiotherapist directly anywhere in Canada.
- Ask for a recommendation from your family doctor. While a direct referral is not necessary, your physician may be able to suggest a physiotherapist for your particular concern. Further, while many physiotherapy services are covered by provincial health care plans, Workers Compensation plans and private insurance, some insurance companies require a doctor's referral for reimbursement.
- Visit the web site of the Canadian Physiotherapy Association at [www.physiotherapy.ca](http://www.physiotherapy.ca). to access our “Find A Physiotherapist” directory and to find out more information about physiotherapy. The CPA web site can also link you to resources for finding physiotherapists through provincial association branches and regulatory colleges.