



## Does your workplace support physical activity?

How does physical activity fit into a full-time employee's busy schedule? Often, it doesn't. But being active at work is beneficial for both employees and employers, who benefit from having healthy, energetic and productive staff members.

### The challenges

Your job takes up a lot of your time—from the hours you're actually working, to commute time, to your lunch hour. You have a limited number of hours outside of your work day and this work-life imbalance is especially true for Alberta, where statistics show that we work exceptionally long hours.

Employment and Social Development Canada reports "in 2012, Alberta workers worked the longest hours on average each week (39.0) compared to the workers of other provinces. This is 2.4 hours longer than the national average of 36.6 hours."

Today, many jobs are sedentary, demanding long hours and plenty of sitting. We often work through our lunches and breaks and are left with a finite amount of time outside of work to juggle our other commitments.

### Getting started

Management plays a key role in fostering workplace health. Workplace leaders influence policies and practices, both informal and formal, and these policies and practices affect your attitude towards active living. Talk to your boss about the benefits of a healthy workplace. The best way to ensure the success of a workplace fitness program is to have management on your side, so ask your boss to consider taking these actions:

- Send a memo about the importance of healthy living that encourages staff to take active breaks each day.
- Provide flexible work hours that help staff to be more physically active. For example, they might need to take a longer lunch break to attend an exercise class, making up the time by coming to work early or staying late.
- Make a meeting room or other office space available for noon-hour yoga or exercise classes; hire a teacher to lead them or use instructional videos.

And if your boss agrees to support a workplace fitness program, don't forget to say thanks.

### You don't need an on-site gym

Only very large companies can afford on-site fitness facilities, such as exercise equipment or squash courts. Still, most employers can take affordable steps to support workers who wish to become more active. For example:

- Arrange for discounted fees for employees at a fitness club, recreation centre or YMCA facility.
- Install showers and a place to hang a towel (make sure the showers are cleaned regularly and that women who use them will feel secure).
- Install bike racks or a locked enclosure that is safe, conveniently located and well lit.
- Hold walking meetings and lunch-hour walking groups.
- Make employees aware of safe and pleasant walking routes near the workplace, as well as nearby facilities that offer fitness programs (such as walking, swimming, running, yoga and stretching).
- Hire a certified instructor to teach staff about health, fitness and how to become more active.

Any size and type of workplace can support employees who wish to be physically active. It's highly desirable to get management on your side, but even if your boss isn't supportive, you can still find ways to get moving more. Set up activities for groups and individuals, and encourage your co-workers to join in.

### Learn more

#### [Alberta Centre for Active Living](#)

The Physical Activity at Work web site provides information for you and your boss about supporting physical activity in your workplace.

#### [Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work](#)

A newsletter, information and briefs to help you create a healthy workplace.

*Content provided courtesy of Alberta Health's Healthy U initiative.*



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