



## Health buddies at work: boosting workplace wellness

Encouraging or forming a network of workplace health buddies can be a great way for employees to get social support from their co-workers, as each individual strives to achieve their own specific health goals.

Individuals who have social support are more likely to enjoy good mental well-being and adopt healthy behaviours, such as engaging in regular physical activity and healthy eating.

Workplace health buddies can include pairs, small groups or networks of work colleagues. When co-workers connect with each other as health buddies, it fosters encouragement, provides moral support and promotes the sharing of ideas.

Healthy buddy networks can be set up at single or multiple work locations. For instance, if co-workers work at different locations, they can connect with each other via email, intranet, apps or social media. In smaller workplaces, buddies can connect and support each other in person (by walking together on lunch breaks, for instance) or by connecting online.

### Walking is a good first step

In Alberta, UWALK.ca is being used by some workplace health buddies to challenge each other to be more physically active. UWALK.ca is a free, interactive web site that employees can use to help keep them motivated and on track toward better health.

Through UWALK.ca, workplace health buddies can

- log their physical activity online,
- track their progress and set personal goals,
- connect with co-workers, and
- create and participate in individual or group challenges.

By participating in a group challenge through UWALK.ca, workplace health buddies can have fun together and get extra motivation as they work towards individual health goals.

Developing a small or large network of workplace health buddies should always be fun and pressure-free. Networks can be short-lived, long-lasting or varied over time, but they should allow employees to connect through shared health goals and interests, such as regular walking, running or cycling together, or taking active breaks together during work hours.

How a healthy network forms is not critical; the important factor is the social support that the network provides to its participants.

Although health buddy networks should be established and led by employees, employers can also help in many ways; they can promote the healthy buddy concept, support active breaks and generally encourage employee health and wellness.

### Learn more

#### [Workplace Health Buddies](#)

An article, posted on [openideo.com](#), that offers insights on using business social networking to support workplace health.

#### [Healthy Workplace Month Buddy System](#)

An example of a short-term buddy system implemented at McMaster University.

#### [UWALK](#)

Set up individual or group challenges at UWALK.ca.

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



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