

## Starting a Walking Club at your Workplace

Walking Clubs are easy to organize and are a great way to encourage your co-workers to get active. Clubs can include people of all physical activity levels. Here are suggestions on how to start your own walking club.

### Setting up a Walking Group

- Make it fun, easy and accessible.
- Start gradually, keep it simple at first. Your club could be informal to start and become more structured as the need arises.
- Remember that not everyone will be at the same fitness levels or be able to walk at the same pace. If you have a large group, you can divide them into sub-groups according to levels. This doesn't mean that anyone is stuck in that one group; encourage participants to move up or down into different groups.

### Promoting your Club

- Brainstorm ways to communicate information about your walking group.
- Spread the word! Word-of-mouth can be very effective. Find people who may be interested and have them pass on the word. Use voicemail, e-mail and posters to get employees interested.
- Put up a poster with the day and time you are walking.
- Encourage employees to take their break by walking and getting a bit of fresh air to re-energize!

### The Basics

#### *Set a Time*

- Choose a consistent time that walkers will meet.
- Plan your walks during break times, noon hours, or before or after work.

#### *Set a Route*

- Before starting, set your route. Sometimes it's easier to base it on time rather than distance. If you want to know the distance, use your car or a pedometer to measure it. Remember, the faster you are moving, the more distance your route will have to cover.

#### *Walking Speed*

- Offer a 20 minute outdoor walking route or a longer route if you have more experienced walkers. Remember when planning your route that employee safety is always a key factor.
- If possible, have a back-up indoor route for bad weather. That way your group can still walk, rain or shine!

- Post maps of the walking circuit you will take. You may want to vary the route to keep up interest.
- Always meet at a predetermined location at the same time.
- Watch out for routes that are less than ideal (Ex: poor surface conditions, busy roads, unsafe surroundings, or routes that are too difficult).

### **Motivational Tips**

- Put a huge chart up in a common area where everyone can chart his/her progress. Most of the time we are each other's best motivators.
- Organize a "lunch and learn" and invite someone from a local sports store to come and talk about types of walking shoes.
- A fitness facility may also agree to provide an instructor to do a workshop on walking technique to help you get started.
- Substitute other activities for your club depending on the interest and season. Think about a cycling club, triathlon club, or an inline skating club.
- Set up a challenge or a co-operative activity to achieve a "team goal". For example, track the number of kilometres walked to meet a goal like walking around Manitoba or across Canada. Contests or challenges could be between departments or work units.
- Have a contest to come up with a creative name for your walking club.
- Want a fun look for your club members? Purchase ***in motion*** t-shirts for your walkers through Manitoba ***in motion*** at [www.manitobainmotion.ca/about/merchandise](http://www.manitobainmotion.ca/about/merchandise).
- Offer small incentives such as **Manitoba *in motion*** certificates of recognition.