

Physical Activity Integration



Many of us work physically demanding jobs. Whether on a farm or in a hotel, your body is working hard. Sprains, strains, and back injuries sometimes happen. Stretching or warming up may help reduce injuries. And although workers may be active on the job, it might not be enough for good health. Finding ways to bring physical activity (PA) into the work day can help workers be fit and reduce the risk of injury.

STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. Work with your Wellness Committee. They will have the experience to know which methods will benefit your staff.
 2. Find out what kinds of PA programs interest employees.
 3. Develop a plan.
 4. Let workers know about the program. Educate them on the benefits of PA. Recognize their successes.
 5. Evaluate your program. Make changes as they are needed.
- Ask the PA expert to lead the warm ups once a week for a month. Then the staff can take turns leading others to correctly do the warm ups and avoid injuries.
 - Make it a routine. Do the warm ups every day at the beginning of the shift.
 - Get workers involved in leading the warm up.
 - Post signs that explain the importance of starting each day with a warm up.

TOOL TIPS

- **DAILY WARM UP.** Start each shift with a 5-10 minute warm up followed by stretching.
 - Ask management if they will hire a PA expert to come to your site. He or she can look at repetitive movement and job tasks. He or she might also be able to test worker fitness levels. Then he or she can determine which stretches and warm ups might help prevent injury. He or she may also find less harmful ways to do certain tasks.

IN AGRICULTURE:

Farming is physical labor. It can work the muscles in all areas of the body while burning calories. In 1996, 34% of lost-time injuries in agriculture were due to sprains and strains. And almost a quarter were due to back injuries.¹ There is a double concern when addressing physical activity at agricultural sites. Although workers may be active while at work, it may not be enough to maintain health or reduce stress. Further, if workers do not warm up and stretch before their activities in the field, this may increase their likelihood of injury.

¹ National Center for Farmworker Health, www.ncfh.org/?sid=36; 2002, accessed 2/27/2014

- **WALK AND TALK MEETINGS.** Conduct meetings while walking around the building, field, or campus. This will provide workers with a break from their repetitive movements.
 - Set an amount of time for the meeting so people can prepare to spend the time walking.
 - Bring a note pad. Jot down notes from the meeting, if necessary.
 - Let people know in advance so they can bring a water bottle or coat and wear appropriate shoes.
 - As always, have a meeting goal.
- **PA EVENTS.** Show support for PA through company and community events:
 - Sponsor a company team in a local league made up of workers or others.
 - Host a company BBQ for staff and their families. Include fitness games.
 - Sponsor a charity sports event with a company team.
- **PA CHALLENGE.** Work with your Wellness Committee to organize a PA challenge. The *Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch's Take Action!* is one option. A challenge is a good way to launch a wellness program. It can encourage workers to take part in other wellness activities. Team challenges spark competition, social support, and goal setting.
- **PARTNER WITH LOCAL HEALTH AND FITNESS EXPERTS.** Partners may help by offering health screenings, fitness assessments, and classes.
 - **Health education classes.** Offer health education classes during lunch or after work. Here are some organizations who may be able to provide classes:
 - Local health department
 - City parks and recreation
 - American Heart Association
 - Local hospitals, clinics, or health plans
 - **Fitness classes.** Hire a local instructor to conduct on-site fitness classes one day a week. Classes might include:
 - Yoga
 - Zumba
 - Aerobics
 - **Professional assessments.** Hire a fitness expert to conduct fitness assessments. Also, consider finding someone who can perform ergonomic analyses. They can help you determine which repetitive movements might cause problems. They may help you figure out better ways to do tasks to avoid injury.
 - **Health fair.** Sponsor a health fair at your site. Try working with a local clinic. Ask them to do health screenings. Invite health-focused organizations to attend. Provide employees with information on nutrition and PA. Give it to them in a way that they can take home to share with their families.
 - **Gym club memberships.** Ask for reduced rates for memberships at local health clubs.

AGRICULTURE RESOURCES:

Educational and injury prevention tip sheets can be found on the National Center for Farmworker Health:

www.ncfh.org/index.php?pid=113

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Simple Solutions: Ergonomics for Farm Workers guide can be found here:

www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2001-111/pdfs/2001-111.pdf



GO FURTHER

Employers can help to encourage a strong wellness program by providing basic resources and support. The following are ways that an employer can support a wellness program.

- **Make policies.** Decide which techniques have been successful and write them into company health policies, where appropriate.
- **Lead by example.** Nothing shows your dedication to wellness more than getting involved and improving your own health. Participate in your wellness program. Model healthy behaviors.
- **Offer incentives.** Incentives should support activities in your program. Some examples of incentives for PA include:
 - Pedometer
 - T-shirts with health messages
 - Hats/bandanas
 - Refillable water bottles
 - Paid time-off
 - Gift cards to healthy restaurants or local gyms
 - Sports equipment for the family

- **Provide healthy messages.** Offer workers information about your wellness program. Include educational information about PA, and motivational support. Some tips for effective messaging include:

1. Promote your messages through paycheck stuffers, brochures or handouts, posters, or wellness bulletin boards.
2. Hang posters in high traffic areas. Try the break room fridge, or the restroom.
3. Change posters, bulletin boards, and paycheck stuffers often.
4. Have a wellness display in the employee break room. Include brochures and healthy recipes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit our website at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/WorksiteProgram.aspx for:

- sample policies.
- printable handouts.
- more information.



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