



# Promoting walking

## TravelSmart Workplace fact sheet

### WHY WALK? BENEFITS TO YOUR ORGANISATION

Workplaces are great locations to promote healthy living and integrate physical activity into daily life. Walking is a healthy, accessible and inexpensive alternative to the car for short trips that organisations can promote to their employees, clients and visitors.

This fact sheet provides information on developing a workplace walking program as part of building a healthy workplace through active travel opportunities.

#### Health

At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days is recommended for good health<sup>(1)</sup>.

Walking is a free, healthy activity that generally doesn't require any special equipment and can easily be incorporated into the working day. The wide range of health benefits include:

- Reduces the risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis
- Burns calories and helps manage weight
- Reduces blood pressure and cholesterol
- Improves fitness and muscle tone
- Improves quality of sleep and is energizing – it's a great way to wake up in the morning or relax after work .

### PROFILE: Diabetes WA

Diabetes WA ran a variety of fun and engaging walking activities in 2012. The walking campaign included 12 events, with an average of 30% of staff getting involved at each event.

Their walking club took place three times a week for a month and organisers received a lot of positive feedback about the initiative. Staff reported they felt refreshed and motivated afterwards and it was great to include a social form of exercise in the day.

#### Social

Physical activity is a significant element of social interaction, building a more connected workplace community, strengthening organisational cohesion and reducing employee isolation. As an activity everyone can participate in, walking is an ideal way to improve the social environment in your workplace.

#### Environmental

Walking can help improve your organisation's environmental rating by reducing vehicle dependence and the associated problems of traffic congestion, parking, noise and pollution. Short car trips are the least fuel efficient and most polluting – walking is a zero emission alternative.

#### Economic

Increasing physical activity through walking improves productivity, reduces absenteeism in the workplace and supports overall economic growth<sup>(2)</sup>.

- Fewer insurance and worker compensation claims
- Attract and retain workers seeking healthy working conditions
- Improved staff attitudes towards the organisation and higher staff morale
- Helps to manage transport congestion issues.



## A QUICK GUIDE TO PROMOTING WALKING IN YOUR WORKPLACE

### 1. WHY PROMOTE WALKING?

It's a healthy, practical and inexpensive alternative to the car for short trips that's good for everybody in your workplace.

- Improve health and workplace morale
- Reduce absenteeism and increase productivity
- Improve your environmental rating
- Reduce transport and parking costs

### 2. GETTING STARTED: GATHERING INFO

- Build support and gather data about current levels of walking
- Use the data to identify problems/ issues, brainstorm solutions and see what resources you have/need

### 3. MAKING A PLAN

- Have specific and achievable workplace walking goals
- Draw up a travel plan or simply an action list to increase walking

### 4. SUPPORT AND PROMOTION

- Get the word out: promote your initiatives in your workplace through posters, meetings, newsletters, and other internal networks.
- Build management support

### 5. ACTIVITIES

- Hold activities to involve workers in walking more
- Use pledges and commitments

### 6. MOMENTUM AND EVALUATION

- Develop strategies to continue motivation for walking once activities are underway.
- Track how well your walking initiatives are going

# Getting started



## KEY POINTS

Your first steps in planning:

1. Gather relevant information about staff
2. Work out what you are trying to achieve
3. Find out what resources already exist to help you
4. Build management support
5. Consider making your walking initiatives part of a broader travel plan for your workplace

Before deciding on how to encourage staff to walk, ask yourself these four questions:

### 1. How many people already walk in your workplace and what do people want from a walking program?

Finding out what people want is an essential way to ensure your walking initiatives are designed to meet the interests and needs of the people in your workplace. Consultation increases the likelihood of your program making a difference and establishes benchmarks for later evaluation. Methods include:

- Informal discussions with staff will attract interest, identify a range of ideas, and help you identify people to champion your initiatives.
- A travel survey is a good way to determine travel patterns, motivations and interest, see what staff want in relation to walking, and create a database to register participants<sup>(3)</sup>.

### 2. What do you want to achieve by encouraging people to walk more?

Examples of goals for a workplace program include a more energetic and productive workforce, more socialisation, better travel management, less transport-related cost and environmental impacts, and so on.

### 3. What resources exist to help you? Ask yourself:

- What existing opportunities do you have at your workplace to support walking initiatives? E.g. facilities, flex time policy, nearby public transit stops
- What are the existing programs, events and activities in your workplace and community that could support your initiatives? E.g. regular staff meetings or annual events such as health fairs, walking challenges etc.

### 4. What support do you need to best deliver the outcome you seek?

Walking initiatives that are supported by management have a far greater likelihood of succeeding (although many committed employees achieve results despite a lack of executive support). Preferably, management should be openly seen as supporting walking initiatives.

Tips for involving management:

- Approach management with your ideas to get people walking and ensure they understand reasons and benefits for increasing walking for work related trips.
- Ask members of the management team what they think would work and what support the organisation could provide.
- Ask management to communicate their support e.g. at events, through an active travel plan or policy.
- Ensure that you discuss the issue of resources for the workplace walking initiatives. Resources include funds as well as staff time to coordinate and administer activities.

## MAKE A TRAVEL PLAN

Travel plan measures, including those that promote walking, are a way that your organisation can be proactive in influencing the way people travel to and from your workplace. By implementing a travel plan, your organisation can give staff and visitors better travel choices that benefit everyone.

Find out more about workplace travel plans at [www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace)



# Ideas to get people walking

## WALKING IS A GREAT OPTION

If staff live within 2-3km of their workplace then walking to work can be a good option. However, even for staff living farther away there are many opportunities during the working day where walking may be incorporated.

Every workplace is different in terms of the type of work employees do, the number of employees, staff capacity to implement initiatives, and level of interest in walking.

The Workplace Action Table (page 8) provides a good start to determining what resources you will need to encourage walking in your organisation.

Some ideas:

### Use profiles to motivate staff

Find out about successful walkers and why they do it. What are their motivations for walking more in their working day and what benefits have they achieved? Simply telling people the benefits of walking will probably not be enough to get them walking more. Inspire people by showing them what other staff have achieved. Profile some regular walkers in your workplace and promote their stories around your workplace.

### Walking groups

When people walk in groups, the social support supplied by the group provides motivation to walk regularly, increases safety and makes walking more enjoyable.

Many people find it hard to fit physical activity into their busy schedules so a brisk 10 – 20 minute walk can be a great opportunity.

Walking groups can be informal or more organised, depending on the needs of participants. Producing simple maps of pleasant walk routes around your workplace can help promote walking groups as well as independent walking activities.

### Walking Events

Walking events can be a good way to encourage people to discover walking facilities and mix with other walkers in the workplace.

Events can tie into broader workplace and community initiatives, such as an annual fitness challenge, Walk Over October or National Walk to Work Day.

Your workplace can also organise a corporate team for charity events such as the annual City to Surf or HBF Run for a Reason, so that the whole community benefits and you build a good corporate image.

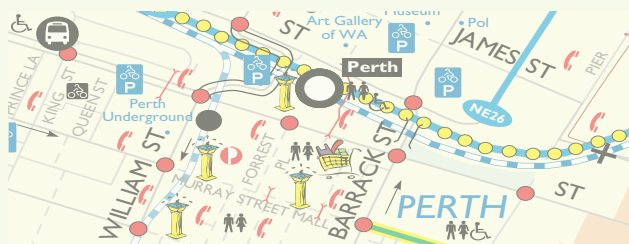


### Promote existing walking routes

Find out about designated walking paths from your workplace to shopping and recreation areas, transit stops and any local business destinations. By promoting these routes and providing information to staff, you can illustrate the easiness of walking for short trips.

## LOCAL TRAVELSMART GUIDES

Take a look at the variety of Local TravelSmart Guides available. Each guide shows walking, cycling and public transport routes and local facilities such as supermarkets, public toilets, parks, playgrounds, etc.



### Challenges

Encouraging staff to make a pledge to increase their daily physical activity through walking is a great way to give people something to work towards. Challenges are a great way to kick start walking habits because:

- There is a limited timeframe for implementation compared to an ongoing, weekly program.
- Participants and organisers can monitor progress and program outcomes in real time.
- The low cost per participant makes them an effective use of resources.



**The Get on Track Challenge** is a free, team-based physical activity and healthy eating program for WA adults. Developed by Diabetes WA, it provides a fun way to make positive steps towards your health and explore the West Australian

landscape at the same time. Teams aim to finish a WA walking track in 8 weeks. Participants log into the interactive website to record their daily physical activity minutes and fruit and vegetable consumption, and watch their team travel along the track.

**Pedometer Challenges** Most adults should be aiming for at least 10,000 steps a day. Pedometers can be used to motivate individuals and groups to reach or exceed this goal. The pedometer allows people to keep track of their 'steps' and they can record their own progress.

A pedometer challenge usually involves a group of participants within an organisation, or between two or more organisations, reaching a target (e.g. walk around Australia). Friendly rivalry between teams or individuals is a great motivator to increase walking.

Tip: investing in a good quality pedometer is important.



**The 10,000 Steps Challenge** is a free pedometer tracking program that encourages each employee to accumulate 10,000 steps per day.

**Loan Programs** enable individuals to borrow a pedometer without a purchase cost. Using a pedometer for a number of weeks can encourage people to purchase their own or teach them to estimate whether they have reached their target number of steps each day. Refundable deposits are an option for covering the cost of a pedometer if it lost, broken or not returned.

#### Tips for challenges:

- Keep up communication with participants through conversations, newsletters or emails.
- Provide incentives for achievements e.g. most steps taken. This can be as simple as a certificate or as elaborate as your budget will allow.
- Emphasise participation, not competition.
- Use the challenge to promote other walking opportunities (walking to meetings, walking groups).
- Hold events at the start and finish of the challenge to encourage participation and announce achievements.
- Challenges can be repeated annually or at different times of the year. Adding new elements to the program, changing destinations or providing different prizes can create new interest and motivation.

## Hit the Streets: Walking Meetings and Walking to Meetings

Make the streets your conference room and get people out of the office during a walking meeting. Walking increases energy and the ability to think clearly – increasing meeting productivity.

You might also promote the idea of relocating business meetings to an off-site location and include walking and public transport as part of the journey to get there. This is a great social and physical activity that introduces people to the idea of using alternative modes to the car for work related trips.

### PROFILE: Diabetes WA

Diabetes WA held a successful group walk that included public transport, providing a great opportunity to socialise, be active and get more familiar with public transport.



### Park and Walk

Encourage staff to park further away from the workplace and walk the rest of the journey, increasing their daily physical activity and possibly saving them money in parking.

### Public Transport

Walking is a significant component of the journey for regular public transport users. A study of Perth residents found that public transport commuters walk 13 minutes on average for each trip, which is 26 minutes a day – just about the recommended 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily for good health<sup>6</sup>. Promote the idea of getting off a stop earlier to include extra physical activity.



# Getting the word out and keeping up motivation



## KEY POINTS

- Use promotional materials for multiple purposes
- Keep up motivation to ensure your walking initiatives contribute to lasting behaviour change
- Consider motivational tools such as reminders of progress, ongoing challenges and support, personal pledges and goal making, and recognition and incentive schemes
- Evaluate initiatives to keep them relevant

## Promotion

Promotional materials, tools and activities not only provide people with ideas about how they can incorporate more walking in their working day, but they also help to address many of the barriers people perceive in getting more physical activity into their daily schedule.

### Information tips

- Keep information and gear at reception e.g. maps, umbrellas, hats, sunscreen.
- Distribute TravelSmart Guides and other walking information materials.

### Promotion tips

- Promote your initiatives through posters, information boards, brochures, newsletters, and online communications (intranet and internet). Follow-up on your promotional materials such as posters and brochures, to ensure they are not taken down before your event or program starts.
- Timing – promote at the right time (e.g. during a workplace event/meeting) and in the right place (put materials where people will see them).
- Use events to promote future activities e.g. at a Walk to Work Day event distribute information and sign up walkers for a walking group.
- Provide incentives to spark interest in your initiative, such as freebies/prize draws or a healthy morning tea/breakfast. Make sure your incentives work to support your walking initiative (e.g. if you are promoting the health benefits of walking, providing healthy food supports this message).

## Prompts

Use activity/POD prompts: POD (Point of Decision) prompts are motivational signs placed on or near sites where people make behavioural decisions (e.g. stairwells, elevators, car park entrances, building exits) to encourage individuals to make a different decision than their habitual one.

Prompts for workplace walking should be designed to enhance your message and alert people to the easy and different ways to increase walking in their working day.

There are many places you can put prompts, such as:

- Toilets, elevators, stairwells, kitchen area, staff fridge, cupboards, information board e.g.  
Move more, walk to your next meeting.  
Try the stairs instead of the lift today.  
Why not swap the escalator for the stairs today?
- The parking lot, nearby public transit stops e.g.  
Park farther, walk more. Add steps to your day.  
Swap a close park for a short walk.
- Email, organisation webpage, newsletter, etc. e.g.  
Move more and sharpen your thinking: consider a walking meeting.  
Try walking part of your journey to work tomorrow.

The idea is that you encourage people to change a certain behaviour for more active, healthier choice. Make the prompts relevant and personal to your workplace.

You can even get a champion involved who regularly participates in the behaviour you are trying to promote, such as "Our Director takes the stairs instead of the lift. Why not give it a go?"

## Keeping up the motivation

Once you have started initiatives in your workplace, you will need to find ways to motivate participants to remain active in the long-term.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to keeping people enthused so it is important to use an approach that suits your workplace. Some suggestions:

### Visual reminders of progress:

E.g. online or printed wall posters, charts or graphs illustrating either individual or group successes in reaching targets and goals. These materials can be linked to challenges, such as the amount of steps it would take to climb Everest or walk to Sydney. Similar to prompts, these reminders can be used as promotional efforts.

### Self-monitoring strategies:

**Pledges** are a great way to encourage employees to make a commitment to achieve a certain amount of steps or another relevant goal. Simply get people to write down their goal and you can choose to put the pledges up around the office, let people have them at their desks, or create an online document to send in an email or as part of a newsletter.

A pledge works as a motivational tool because it:

- Provides a creative way for people to declare what they are inspired to do and record goals
- Forces people to clarify what they want
- Motivates people to take action
- Helps to overcome resistance by focussing on the goal, not the barriers
- Enables people to see their progress.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT PLEDGE FLAGS

As part of a TravelSmart to Schools event, Department of Transport staff used pledge flags to write down their declarations, inspirations and goals around using physically active transport. A good walking related example was "I will walk to the train 3 times a week."

The pledge flags have been a motivational success, as well as a good promotional tool, with a number of external staff inquiring what they are for and wanting to be involved.

They create a bright atmosphere in the office and work as a motivational tool on multiple levels, providing a visual reminder to staff of the commitment they have made.

**Personal tracking devices and charts** can be used by people to track their own progress as they provide instant feedback. Logging time spent walking or distances walked can also serve as a way to monitor progress. If employees have GPS on their phones, blackberries or watches, they can monitor more detailed information such as heart rate, elevation, and pace.

### Challenges and social support

Challenges should be ongoing and have a social element that gives people the opportunity to interact with other participants or participate as a group.

### Recognition and incentives programs

Participation certificates, prizes and rewards are great ways to maintain motivation e.g. discount coupons, water bottles, etc. This could be tied to an employee wellness points program that rewards regular participation.

Announcements through newsletters, intranet, posters and charts are an effective way to recognise the achievements of people walking as part of their work journeys and promote your initiatives to others.

### Evaluation

It is important to monitor your walking program to ensure you are reaching your goals and your initiatives are effective. You can make adjustments to your program as it develops, like changing promotional materials or types of events to suit your workplace. What to consider:

- Were the activities actually carried out as planned?
- Were all objectives and timelines met? If not, why not?
- Were the promotional activities and materials effective in reaching employees? Which were most effective?
- What resources were necessary to implement the program/event (e.g. volunteers, promotional materials, prizes, catering, etc.)?
- How many people participated? What feedback have you received from participants and management?



# Resources

## WORKPLACE CHECKLIST

Question	Your Notes
Why do you want to encourage walking?	
Is there staff interest?	
Have you identified the issues around walking to your workplace?	
How could you promote walking?	
What other events/initiatives will you link with?	
What support/resources do you have available?	
How will you evaluate the program?	

## WORKPLACE ACTION TABLE

Action	Description
Determine interest	Create a registry or conduct a staff travel survey.
Address issues	Identify possible barriers to the scheme such as unsafe infrastructure, poor lighting, shower facilities, funding, weather . Use your walking initiative/s to address these barriers.
Gain support	Take your findings and plan to management to seek support and allocation of resources.
Decide on approach	How will you target walking to best suit your audience? E.g. will you focus on health, environmental or social benefits?
Walking groups	Gather interested walkers together to provide social support to encourage regular walking.
Pedometers	Use pedometers to motivate walkers to monitor their steps and increase walking. You could use a challenge, loan system or combination of the two methods.
Walking events	Hold a special event to highlight walking in the workplace, making it visible and desirable.
Promotion	Market the idea through incentives and information outlets to encourage greater participation.
Evaluation	Use surveys, attendance sheets, and feedback forms to determine the popularity and success of the program.



## ENDNOTES

- (1) National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults. *Department of Health and Ageing (1999).*
- (2) Active Living for All: A Framework for Physical Activity in Western Australia 2012-2016. *Physical Activity Taskforce (2012).*
- (3) TravelSmart Workplace has a range of tools and resources for travel surveys and travel planning. Visit [www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace)
- (4) Survey of travel by City of Melville residents for the Department of Transport.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Heart Foundation Walking** A comprehensive resource hub for all things walking related, including general walking information, tips and materials for workplace coordinators, events, groups, merchandise, and publications. [www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/walking/Pages/Workplace.aspx](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/walking/Pages/Workplace.aspx)

**TravelSmart to Work Walking Brochure**  
[www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/travelsmartworkplace)

**BUPA A Guide to Walking**  
[www.bupa.com.au/health-and-wellness/health-information/az-health-information/a-guide-to-walking](http://www.bupa.com.au/health-and-wellness/health-information/az-health-information/a-guide-to-walking)

## EVENTS

**National Walk to Work Day**  
[www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp](http://www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp)

## CHALLENGES/TRACKING TOOLS

**Walk Over October** A month-long walking campaign held in October [www.walkoveroctober.com.au](http://www.walkoveroctober.com.au)

**Diabetes WA Get on Track Challenge**  
[www.getontrackwa.com.au](http://www.getontrackwa.com.au)

**10,000 Steps Challenge for Workplaces**  
[www.10000steps.org.au/index/workplaces](http://www.10000steps.org.au/index/workplaces)

**Map My Walk** Available online and as a mobile app. Allows mapping and sharing of walking routes, tracking the distance, pace and elevation of walks  
[www.mapmywalk.com](http://www.mapmywalk.com)

**Corporate Walking Challenge**  
Conducted as part of Walk Over October  
[www.transport.wa.gov.au/activetransport/24058.asp](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/activetransport/24058.asp)

**Global Corporate Challenge**  
[www.gettheworldmoving.com/](http://www.gettheworldmoving.com/)

