

Physical Activity at Meetings

It's important to include physical activity breaks during meetings, especially those lasting longer than an hour. Including physical activity in meetings not only can help staff stay attentive and involved; it can also demonstrate how easy it is to be more active on a regular basis. By having physical activity breaks, WIC is setting a good example. Here are some suggestions:

- Use icebreakers that encourage people to move around.
- Activity breaks can include stretching exercises, low impact cardiovascular activities (e.g. aerobics, salsa dance steps, etc.), and/or strength training activities (e.g. elastic band routines). Just put on some music and demonstrate some simple activities.
- Include physical activity as part of the meeting agenda by having "walk and talk" sessions. Encourage participants to go for short walks while they discuss agenda items. Not only do they get a much needed activity break, but a change of scenery can encourage more creative brainstorming.
- Encourage attendees to use the stairs when possible.
- If it's a multiple day meeting, list nearby activity opportunities in the meeting information. Encourage attendees to get physical activity by using hotel workout rooms and/or walking in safe, well-lit locations.
- Give participants maps of nearby attractions and walking trails. Help to organize walking groups.

Adapted from "Meeting Well" from the American Cancer Society, and "Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars, and Catered Events" from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

Tips for Leading a Physical Activity Break

Physical activity breaks are a great opportunity for staff to get part of their recommended daily 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity. You don't have to be an aerobics instructor or even physically fit to lead a physical activity break. The key is to remember to have fun and be safe.

A physical activity break IS:

- Completely voluntary – no one is required to participate.
- Movement at each person's own rate, in a way that is comfortable and causes no pain.
- Movement that keeps people moving for 5 to 10 minutes and gets the heart pumping.
- Activity that makes you smile at yourself and with your co-workers.
- A way to get energy for the rest of the meeting.

A physical activity break DOES NOT:

- Need to cause people to sweat.
- Need to cause pain.
- Need to be a professionally-organized session.

Here are some physical activity tips:

- Physical activity breaks can happen right in your meeting room, but there should be enough room so that no one falls over a chair or bumps a knee.
- Physical activity breaks can also be taken outside the room or outside the building.
- Stretch your body slowly and gradually. Don't bounce. Stop if it hurts.
- Move your arms, hands, legs, feet, and head in circles.
- Try marching in place, raising your knees as far as comfortable.
- Walk around the room or right outside.
- Smile!

Adapted from “Tips for Leading a Physical Activity Break” from the San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency

Include activity or stretch breaks in meeting agendas, or conduct meetings while walking.

From “Check for Health, Workplace Environmental Assessment”, from the CA 5 a Day Worksite Program

Make physical activity easier. Providing time for physical activity during breaks, meetings, and at lunchtime is a huge endorsement and incentive. Support for physical activity can also be provided by encouraging “walking meetings”, setting dress codes that allow for comfortable clothing and shoes, and making space available.

From “Fruits and Vegetables and Physical Activity at the Worksite: Business Leaders and Working Women Speak Out on Access and Environment”, from the CA 5 a Day Worksite Program

If participants agree, office meetings can be held standing up, and one-on-one meetings can take place while walking around the block. Employees can be encouraged to take stretch breaks, to use the stairs between floors instead of the elevator, and to walk on their breaks instead of sitting around.

From “Workplace Nutrition and Physical Activity Issue Brief”, from the CA Nutrition Network and CA 5 a Day Campaign