

## Acknowledgements



For more information on Creating a Healthy Workplace  
contact the Healthy Communities & Injury Prevention Team at  
519-663-5317 ext. 2220



Information is for general informational purposes and is subject to change. Although our goal is to provide current and accurate information, the Middlesex-London Health Unit is not responsible for any damages resulting from incorrect or out-of-date information. (Revised 2016)

## Introduction

### Physical Activity and the Workplace

Employees who are more active benefit the workplace! A workplace that supports physical activity will help employees achieve optimal health and success at work! It also makes good business sense because a healthier workforce is associated with<sup>1</sup>:

- Improved productivity with energized employees
- Reduced health care costs
- Decreased rate of turnover
- Lower injury rates
- Lower employee absenteeism due to illness



### Physical Inactivity:

- Is a recognized public health issue in Canada and globally
- Has been identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality causing an estimated 3.2 million deaths globally<sup>2</sup>
- Is a major contributor to chronic disease and health care spending in Canada. Specifically, 15% to 39% of the seven chronic diseases examined were attributable to physical inactivity. (coronary artery disease (CAD), stroke, hypertension, colon cancer, breast cancer (women only), type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis)<sup>3</sup>

**The bottom line: Physical Activity is essential to good health!**

Making positive changes and supporting **physical activity** in the workplace can lead to improved employee health and well-being. This leads to improved employee satisfaction and commitment, and contributes to a more productive workforce.

## ‘Creating Physical Activity in the Workplace’

provides:

- ❖ Physical Activity recommendations for adults, 18-64 years
- ❖ Suggested activities to assist employers to support active workplaces
- ❖ Resources for both the employer and employee

## Policy

Commitment to physical activity is best demonstrated to employees by establishing a physical activity policy. For support with modifying an existing workplace policy to include physical activity or to create a new physical activity policy contact the Middlesex-London Health Unit, Healthy Communities & Injury Prevention team at 519-663-5317 ext. 2220.



For other workplace wellness resources, visit <http://www.healthunit.com/workplace-health>

For information on the [Canadian Physical Activity Guideline Scientific Statement for Adults-18-64 Years](http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CanadianPhysicalActivityGuidelinesStatements_E%203.pdf) including the definition of “apparently healthy adult” visit [http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CanadianPhysicalActivityGuidelinesStatements\\_E%203.pdf](http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CanadianPhysicalActivityGuidelinesStatements_E%203.pdf)

For information that supports the **Business Case** visit:

[Alberta Centre for Active Living- Physical Activity @ Work @](http://www.ualberta.ca/~active/workplace/beforestart/benefits-bottom-line.html)  
<http://www.ualberta.ca/~active/workplace/beforestart/benefits-bottom-line.html>

[Public Health Agency of Canada-Healthy Living Unit @](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/hlu-umvs/index-eng.php)  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-ps/hl-mvs/hlu-umvs/index-eng.php>

# Facts

## Physical Activity

**Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure increasing heart rate and breathing<sup>4</sup>  
{Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP)}**

**Being physically active has so many benefits...**

- Better health
- Improved endurance/aerobic ability
- Stronger muscles and bones
- Improves energy levels
- Improves mental health
- Maintain mobility
- Improves ability to be independent as one ages
- Improves mood and self-esteem
- Helps to cope with stress
- Helps maintain a healthy body weight
- And provides enjoyment

**According to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, regular physical activity can improve health by lowering the risk of developing...**

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Certain types of cancer (such as breast cancer, colon cancer)
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Osteoporosis



## Physical Inactivity:

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- Is a major contributor to chronic disease and health care spending in Canada. Specifically, 15% to 39% of the seven chronic diseases examined were attributable to physical inactivity. (coronary artery disease (CAD), stroke, hypertension, colon cancer, breast cancer (women only) , type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis)<sup>3</sup>
- Obesity is costing Ontario \$4.5 billion a year or about \$313 per person each year<sup>5</sup>
- According to the Canadian Health Measures Survey, about 1 in 5 adults achieve the recommended levels of 150 minutes of moderate –to-vigorous activity (MVPA) ( in 10 minute bouts) as set out by the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines<sup>6</sup>

## Resources

For more information and/or copies of the [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](#), visit <http://www.csep.ca/home>

The [Health at Work 4 All!](#) manual provides a model and framework, and outlines the process for employers to create and implement their own workplace wellness program.

Health at Work 4 All! <http://www.healthunit.com/workplace-health>

# How much Physical Activity is Enough?

Physical Activity is important throughout the lifespan. The [Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology \(CSEP\)](#) has developed guidelines for the early years (0-4 years), children and youth (5-17 years), adults (18-64 years) and the older adults (65 years & older). These guidelines are relevant to all apparently healthy individuals.

Copies for your employees and members of their family, can be downloaded for free from the [Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology](#) website.



## Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults (18-64 years)

The [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults - 18 to 64 Years](#) identifies the amount, intensity and types of physical activity for health benefits<sup>4</sup>.

- To achieve health benefits, adults 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more.
- It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.
- More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.

**NOTE:** It is recommended that everyone consult a health professional prior to starting any physical activity program. If you have never been active or have been inactive for a while, complete a [Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire](#).

**Any amount of physical activity is considered better than no physical activity at all!**

## Resources

- Copies of the [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and the Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/view.asp?x) can be found at the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology at <http://www.csep.ca/view.asp?x>
- The [Physical Activity Resource Centre](http://parc.ophea.net/resource/adult-physical-activity-guidelines-poster) has developed an Adult Physical Activity Guideline poster that can be downloaded and used in your workplace. <http://parc.ophea.net/resource/adult-physical-activity-guidelines-poster>
- The Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology (CSEP) has [Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaires](http://www.csep.ca/view.asp?ccid=517) available (such as the PAR-Q & You) <http://www.csep.ca/view.asp?ccid=517>
- [Pregnancy and Physical Activity Resources](http://www.healthunit.com/physical-activity-pregnancy) are available on the Middlesex -London Health Unit website at <http://www.healthunit.com/physical-activity-pregnancy>

For information about the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and the 24-Hour Movement Guidelines For Children and Youth visit [Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology](http://www.csep.ca)

Pregnancy and Physical Activity resources are available at the [Middlesex-London Health Unit](http://www.healthunit.com/physical-activity-pregnancy) website at <http://www.healthunit.com/physical-activity-pregnancy>

For more information on Physical Activity and tips/community resources visit

1. [Middlesex-London Health Unit](http://www.healthunit.com/) website @ <http://www.healthunit.com/>
2. [In motion](http://www.inmotion4life.ca) website @ [www.inmotion4life.ca](http://www.inmotion4life.ca)

# Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

**FOR ADULTS - 18 – 64 YEARS**

## Guidelines



To achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.



It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.



More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

### Let's Talk Intensity!

Moderate-intensity physical activities will cause adults to sweat a little and to breathe harder. Activities like:

- Brisk walking
- Bike riding

Vigorous-intensity physical activities will cause adults to sweat and be 'out of breath'. Activities like:

- Jogging
- Cross-country skiing

### Being active for at least **150 minutes per week** can help reduce the risk of:

- Premature death
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Certain types of cancer
- Type 2 diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Overweight and obesity

And can lead to improved:

- Fitness
- Strength
- Mental health (morale and self-esteem)

### Pick a time. Pick a place. Make a plan and move more!

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Join a weekday community running or walking group. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rake the lawn, and then offer to do the same for a neighbour. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Go for a brisk walk around the block after dinner. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Train for and participate in a run or walk for charity!       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take a dance class after work.                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take up a favourite sport again or try a new sport.           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bike or walk to work every day.                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Be active with the family on the weekend!                     |

**Now is the time. Walk, run,  
or wheel, and embrace life.**

# Now is the time to get up and get moving!



## Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines For Adults – 18 - 64 Years



To achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate – to vigorous – intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.



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# PAR-Q & YOU

(A Questionnaire for People Aged 15 to 69)

Regular physical activity is fun and healthy, and increasingly more people are starting to become more active every day. Being more active is very safe for most people. However, some people should check with their doctor before they start becoming much more physically active.

If you are planning to become much more physically active than you are now, start by answering the seven questions in the box below. If you are between the ages of 15 and 69, the PAR-Q will tell you if you should check with your doctor before you start. If you are over 69 years of age, and you are not used to being very active, check with your doctor.

Common sense is your best guide when you answer these questions. Please read the questions carefully and answer each one honestly: check YES or NO.

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. <b>Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition <u>and</u> that you should only do physical activity recommended by a doctor?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. <b>Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. <b>In the past month, have you had chest pain when you were not doing physical activity?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. <b>Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. <b>Do you have a bone or joint problem (for example, back, knee or hip) that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. <b>Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs (for example, water pills) for your blood pressure or heart condition?</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. <b>Do you know of <u>any other reason</u> why you should not do physical activity?</b>

If  
you  
answered

## YES to one or more questions

Talk with your doctor by phone or in person BEFORE you start becoming much more physically active or BEFORE you have a fitness appraisal. Tell your doctor about the PAR-Q and which questions you answered YES.

- You may be able to do any activity you want — as long as you start slowly and build up gradually. Or, you may need to restrict your activities to those which are safe for you. Talk with your doctor about the kinds of activities you wish to participate in and follow his/her advice.
- Find out which community programs are safe and helpful for you.

## NO to all questions

If you answered NO honestly to all PAR-Q questions, you can be reasonably sure that you can:

- start becoming much more physically active — begin slowly and build up gradually. This is the safest and easiest way to go.
- take part in a fitness appraisal — this is an excellent way to determine your basic fitness so that you can plan the best way for you to live actively. It is also highly recommended that you have your blood pressure evaluated. If your reading is over 144/94, talk with your doctor before you start becoming much more physically active.

### DELAY BECOMING MUCH MORE ACTIVE:

- if you are not feeling well because of a temporary illness such as a cold or a fever — wait until you feel better; or
- if you are or may be pregnant — talk to your doctor before you start becoming more active.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If your health changes so that you then answer YES to any of the above questions, tell your fitness or health professional. Ask whether you should change your physical activity plan.

**Informed Use of the PAR-Q:** The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, Health Canada, and their agents assume no liability for persons who undertake physical activity, and if in doubt after completing this questionnaire, consult your doctor prior to physical activity.

**No changes permitted. You are encouraged to photocopy the PAR-Q but only if you use the entire form.**

NOTE: If the PAR-Q is being given to a person before he or she participates in a physical activity program or a fitness appraisal, this section may be used for legal or administrative purposes.

"I have read, understood and completed this questionnaire. Any questions I had were answered to my full satisfaction."

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF PARENT \_\_\_\_\_  
or GUARDIAN (for participants under the age of majority)

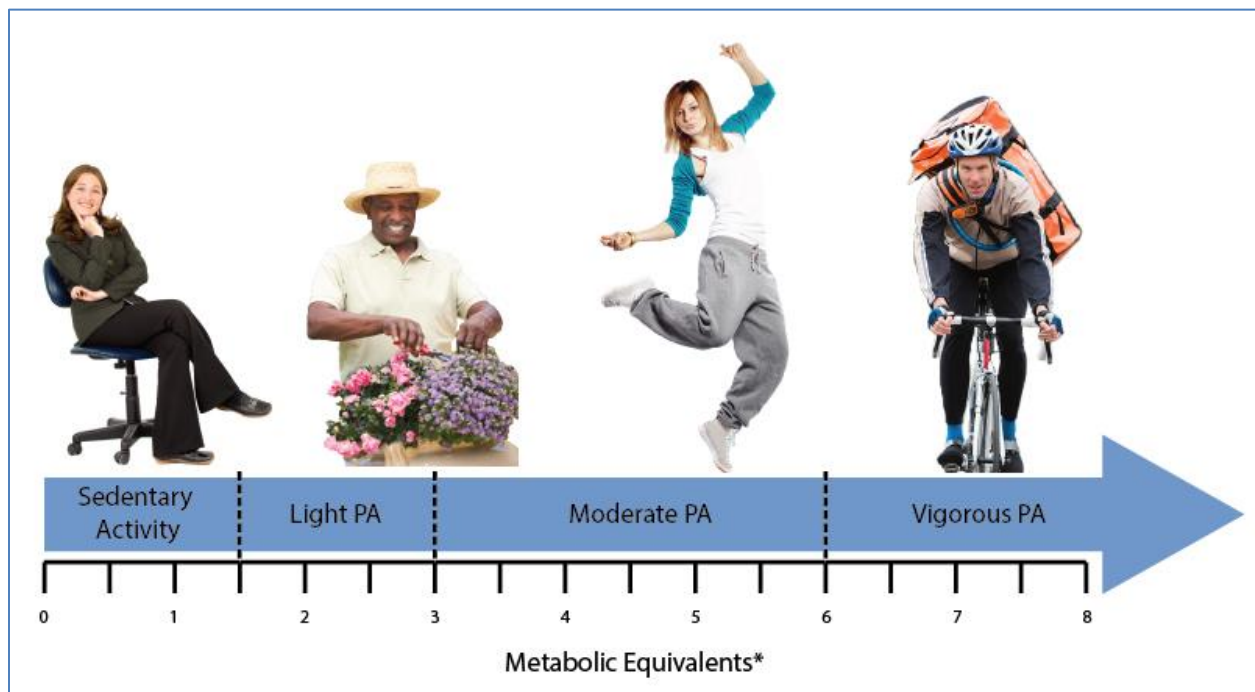
WITNESS \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: This physical activity clearance is valid for a maximum of 12 months from the date it is completed and becomes invalid if your condition changes so that you would answer YES to any of the seven questions.**

# Sedentary Behavior

Sedentary Behaviour describes any low intensity activity that you do while you are awake such as sitting or lying down. Low intensity activity has an energy expenditure of  $\leq 1.5$  metabolic equivalents.<sup>7</sup>

Sedentary behaviour at work includes: sitting at a desk, sitting during meetings, standing in the same spot for long periods of time, commuting in a vehicle to and from work or while on the job.



Reproduced with permission of Alberta Centre for Active Living

The diagram above demonstrates the differences between being sedentary, light physical activity, moderate physical activity and vigorous physical activity. <sup>1,4,7,</sup>		
<b>Sedentary Behavior</b>	prolonged seating	spending less than 1.5 metabolic equivalents
<b>Light Physical Activity</b>	croquet, light gardening or watering plants	expending between 1.5 – 3.0 metabolic equivalents
<b>Moderate Physical Activity</b>	dancing, walking briskly	expending between 3-6 metabolic equivalents
<b>Vigorous Physical Activity</b>	bicycling, running	expending between 6- 8 metabolic equivalents
(PA- physical activity) (Metabolic equivalents- are units of energy expenditure)		

**It is important to keep moving throughout the day!**



## **Promote Activities in your Workplace That Reduce Sedentary Time:**

- Stand-up stretches or take stand-up breaks
- Walk a longer route to do routine activities (e.g. going to the photo copy machine, lunch room, delivering a message to a colleague)
- Encourage quick, short, walks during breaks
- Encourage using stairs
- Stand up while talking on the phone
- Park at the far end of the parking lot to get some extra walking time
- Active transportation - walk, run, or cycle to work
- Take the bus, getting off several stops earlier and walk the rest of the way to work
- Co-ordinate workplace fun activities and challenges
- Hand-deliver a message to a colleague instead of using email or the phone



### **Something to keep in mind...**

**Physical Inactivity** is different than **Sedentary Behaviour**. Physical inactivity means not meeting the recommendations of the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults.

The benefits of physical activity come from being physically active. To reduce the risk of being sedentary, you need to move more and sit less.

## Resources

For more tips visit [ParticipACTION](https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/peptalk/workplace-wellness) at <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca/peptalk/workplace-wellness>

For more information on sitting, visit [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/sitting/sitting_overview.html) at [http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/sitting/sitting\\_overview.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/sitting/sitting_overview.html)

For more information on Active Transportation, visit <http://www.healthunit.com/active-commuting-workplaces>

# Easy Ways to Stretch It Out!

Here are some supports to disseminate to employees to decrease sedentary activity. These can be performed at the employees work area or as an activity break during a meeting.

## A. On-Line Video-Resources for Stretching and Fitness at Work

### 1. [Alberta Centre for Active Living](#)

- [Exercising your Hands and Wrists @ Your Desk](#)
- [Stretching @ Your Desk - Stage 1a: Introducing the Exercises](#)
- [Stretching @ Your Desk - Stage 1b: Introducing the Exercises](#)
- [Stretching @ Your Desk - Stage 2a: Stretching in Your Office](#)
- [Stretching @ Your Desk - Stage 2b: Stretching in Your Office](#)
- [Stretching @ Your Desk - Stage 2c: Stretching in Your Office](#)
- [Yoga @ Your Desk - Part 1: Introducing the Exercises](#)
- [Yoga @ Your Desk - Part 3a: Varying the Exercises](#)
- [Yoga @ Your Desk - Part 3b: Varying the Exercises](#)

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~active/workplace/trr/tools/stretch-at-desk.html>



- ### 2. [A-B-E for Fitness](#) is an evidence –based program that offers 3-8 minute videos for office, work or waiting area. They are short videos that provide activity bursts that you can fit into your workday to break up sedentary behavior.

<http://abeforfitness.com/index.html>



## B. The Stretch Station

No matter how well a workstation is designed, problems may arise if attention is not paid to ergonomics and taking stretch breaks. Working at a computer or on the assembly line often involves very few changes in body position over a period of time. This lack of movement can lead to muscle pain and strain.

To relieve stress, refresh the mind and increase productivity, a short break is often the answer. But, sometimes employees cannot leave the office or plant to go for a walk. Creating a Stretch Station may be the answer.

Materials:

- Yoga mats, basic equipment i.e., stretch bands, light weights etc.
- Stretching guides /posters<sup>8</sup> (refer to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) web-site @ [https://www.ccohs.ca/Stretching- At the Workstation factsheet](https://www.ccohs.ca/Stretching-At-the-Workstation-factsheet) @ <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html>
- Tension Relief: it's a stretch poster @ <http://www.ccohs.ca/products/posters/stretching.html>
- Room dividers for privacy

Provide employees with:

- a corner where they can distress and stretch
- stretching guides/posters to provide direction
- yoga mats and elastic bands for stretching

Use room dividers if your stretch station is not enclosed by walls to ensure privacy. Please note, some employees may feel comfortable doing stretches at their own workstation and not require privacy.

[Criteria for an effective stretching program](#) (PDF 425 KB)



# The Stretch Station

## Criteria for an effective stretching program:

- Warm-up before stretching
- Exercises should be tailored to commonly performed job duties (e.g. for those who work at the office, focus on stretches that involve the neck, shoulder and upper extremities)
- Stretch regularly
- Perform stretches correctly:
  - Hold each stretch for about 15-30 seconds
  - Try to do each stretch 2 or more times
  - Stretch bilaterally, emphasize tight muscles
  - Intensity should be to a gentle pull on muscles, it should not hurt
- Trained instructors could provide a baseline instruction session with employees to teach proper use of the equipment
- Compliance and use of the stretch station should be monitored
- Stretch at appropriate work times throughout the day



## Stress and Physical Activity

**According to the Middlesex - London Community Health Status Resource, 25.7% of people age 20 to 64 reported that most days at work were quite or extremely stressful in 2013/14.<sup>9</sup>**

Being physically active at work is a strategy for reducing the effects of stress. Being physically active for at least 150 minutes per week can lead to improved mental health (morale and self-esteem).

Take a stress break; include these physical activities into the day:

- Take regular stretch breaks
- Take a short brisk walk
- Do a physical activity with a colleague or friend at lunch

The [Canadian Mental Health Association](http://www.cmha.ca/) provides a [Stress Index](#) that employees can do to find out what their stress level is at the present time. This resource can also raise awareness about healthy lifestyle habits.

<http://www.cmha.ca/>

The [Take Your Break](#) section of the website [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](https://workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/) provides healthy break activities. Using breaks to improve mental health can have a positive effect on wellness and productivity. [Take Your Break](#) provides a new idea each week. Activities can be done individually or as part of a team.

<https://workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>

