Physical Activity Assessment at Work

Importance of Using Standardized Measures

Why Physical Activity?
- Lowers the risk of disease and death from all causes
- Improves physical and mental function, quality of life, sleep, mental health, bone health, + more

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
≥ 150 min/week of moderate-intensity OR
≥ 75 min/week of vigorous-intensity OR
Equivalent combination of both
AND
≥ 2 days/week muscle-strengthening
AND
Minimize sedentary behavior

Benefits of Physical Activity at Work
- Reduced absenteeism related to injury, illness
- More productive workforce
- Increased job satisfaction
- Lower HR, healthcare, lost-productivity costs

Get Started Using Standardized Measures
- Identify improvement needs areas and determine appropriate intervention
- Validated assessment of physical activity for improved benchmarking capacity

What to measure
- Aerobic physical activity
  - Minutes MVPA per week
- Muscle strengthening
  - Times per week
- Sedentary behavior
  - Minutes/hours per week (excludes sleep)
- Cardiorespiratory fitness
  - VO2 max

PSE Supports to Promote Physical Activity

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PSE Supports to Promote Physical Activity

Policies
- Paid time to exercise
- Stretching at the beginning of shifts
- Flex-time for physical activity
- Booster break policy
- Allow walking meetings

Get more PSE examples and ideas from the CDC.

Systems
- Increase parking fees
- Integrate program with benefit plan (subsidize gym membership; incentives for public transit)
- Consider employee’s family in benefit design program to promote healthy behavior at home

Environment
- Onsite fitness room, changing area, lockers, showers
- Motivational prompts, signage
- Prominently featured stairs
- Walking/biking trails
- Bike racks, sheltered areas

The above supports are:
- Evidence based
- Grounded in equity and in leadership engagement, buy-in, and modeling
- Low cost

For more information and guidance on measurements, see table from validated research.
Definitions

- **Cardiorespiratory fitness** — The ability of the cardiovascular and respiratory systems to transport oxygen to the muscles to perform physical work, reflecting a person’s aerobic exercise capacity and total body health.

- **Physical activity** — Any bodily movement produced by the contraction of skeletal muscle that increases energy expenditure above a basal level.

- **MET** — Metabolic Equivalent of Task refers to the energy expenditure required to carry out a specific activity. 1 MET is the rate of energy expenditure while sitting at rest.

- **MVPA** — Moderately-to-Vigorous Physical Activity requires expending 3.0 or more METs. Moderate intensity (3.0-6.0 METs) examples include walking briskly at 2.5 or 4 mph, playing doubles tennis or raking the yard. Vigorous-intensity activities (6.0+ METs) include jogging, running, carrying heavy groceries or other loads upstairs, shoveling snow, or participating in a strenuous fitness class.

- **Muscle strengthening activities** — Physical activity, including exercise, that increases skeletal muscle strength, power, endurance and mass. Muscle-strengthening activity has three components: intensity, frequency, and sets and repetitions. Examples include lifting weights, working with resistance bands, doing calisthenics that use body weight (e.g., push-ups, pull-ups), carrying heavy loads, and heavy gardening.

- **PSE** - Policy, Systems and Environment(s)

- **Sedentary behavior** — Any behavior characterized by a low level of energy expenditure (less than or equal to 1.5 METs) while sitting, reclining, or lying.

- **VO2 max** — Maximal oxygen consumption, that is, the maximum amount of oxygen that an individual can utilize during intense or maximal exercise.

Resources


- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Move Your Way® Community Resources](https://www.cdc.gov/moveyourway/index.html)


Thank you

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