

How do you measure up



Australian Better Health Initiative
A joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative.

Workplace Walkathon Event Toolkit

How to organise a Workplace Walkathon

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What is Workplace Walkathon?

Workplace Walkathon is a light-hearted event that aims to help increase activity levels in your workplace.

Work colleagues form teams and conduct a walking race to a virtual destination. This race is done over a set period of time, and is measured by participants counting their steps with a pedometer.

It's easy, it's fun, and enjoying some physical activity is good for everyone, even at work.

Regular physical activity and healthy eating can help maintain good health, prevent overweight and obesity, and can help protect against some lifestyle related chronic diseases, such as some cancers, heart disease and type 2 diabetesⁱ.

Good health can also help to boost productivity and staff morale, and reduce sickness and absenteeism costs, making it a worthwhile investment in preventative health care. Healthy eating and regular physical activity will not only benefit the health and wellbeing of individual people and their families, it can also benefit the wellbeing of your organisation.

The aim of this toolkit is to help you organise a workplace event such as a Workplace Walkathon, to promote physical activity in your organisation. This toolkit includes: information on what the event is and how to organise it, some alternative event ideas, what to do and when to do it, and information on how to get local media involved in your event.

Following your event you may wish to send in some photos from the day to be included on the Measure Up website. Simply email them to info@measureup.gov.au. Remember to seek permission from those in the photos before you send them on (see the [photo consent form](#)).

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2008. *Indicators for chronic diseases and their determinants 2008*. Canberra: AIHW

Things to think about before organising your Workplace Walkathon

Workplace Walkathon is a light hearted, competitive activity that aims to help increase physical activity levels in the workplace. Work colleagues form teams and conduct a walking race to a virtual destination over a period of time by counting their steps with a pedometer. The walkathon may also provide an opportunity for other health promotion activities in the workplace such as promotion of healthier food choices.

Prior to the event you should put together **an information pack** for teams. Look on the Measure Up website, australia.gov.au/MeasureUp for fact sheets and to order Measure Up tape measures and booklets. The packs could also contain information or items from sponsors of your event.

Form teams. This might be managers versus team members or teams made up from across the company. Small work places may also like to compete against another business in the field or local area.

Decide where you are going. Fix a destination as close or as far away as the size and enthusiasm of your teams will allow. Big teams can “cross the state” or even “walk across Australia”, smaller workplaces can aim closer to home.

Work out how many kilometres to your destination. For instance, Sydney to Perth is 4110 km by road. Based on the assumption that each step equals 0.3 metres, there are approximately 2000 steps to the kilometre. Multiply the distance to your destination by 2000 and you have the number of steps your team needs to take to get there. Alternatively you can set a time limit and the team that goes the furthest, wins.

If you have unequally numbered teams, simply calculate the average number of steps taken and use this as the daily figure.

A pedometer is an important piece of equipment for this activity. Perhaps the organisation can purchase these to encourage staff to participate. Alternatively, you may like to approach local businesses with the approval of management to seek sponsorship of pedometers which could display their company logo. Many libraries also have loan systems for pedometers, so check with your local library to see if you can arrange to hire pedometers for the event. Make sure the pedometers you purchase/loan are reliable and accurate.

To approach an organisation for **sponsorship** of your event, you should start by contacting the Marketing, Communications, or Public Relations Manager within the organisations. Some smaller businesses may not have such a person, in this case you may wish to contact one of the general managers. When considering organisations to approach for sponsorship you should consider if they are appropriate for the event, and whether having them as a sponsor will send the right message to the workplace, e.g. a fast-food restaurant may not be the most appropriate.

When you contact the organisation, provide them with information about your organisation and your event including what it is, and how many people are going to be participating. Also explain to them what you would be expecting from their sponsorship, such as **donation of prizes or branded pedometers**. You should also make it clear what they can expect from their sponsorship, such as exposure to the number of your employees, their logo included in all event materials, their logo included on your website, inclusion of a brochure or another item in the event information pack given to staff, and/or their company mentioned in all media releases for the event.

Remember, some team members will be starting from a low activity base, some will already be walking a lot, and others may have a disability. Make sure this is non-judgmental, fun and inclusive. Participants should be encouraged to walk at their own pace. **Note:** If participants are pregnant, have been previously inactive, or suffer from any medical conditions it is recommended that they seek medical advice before commencing vigorous physical activity. Vigorous activity is where you “huff and puff”; where talking in full sentences between breaths is difficult.

Track the teams on a map or a poster in the kitchen/tearoom area – this can help people remember to make healthy choices at lunch time. A poster template is included in the Workplace Walkathon event templates.

The winner is the first team to make it to the virtual destination, or gets closest to the destination by the finish date.

The real winners are the people at your workplace who have participated, enjoyed a fun team building activity, improved their fitness, built productivity and who may have reduced their likelihood of developing a chronic disease.

Celebrate the winning team and the success of the event by hosting a workplace celebration featuring healthy food and special guests. Invite all those that participated or contributed in some way. You might like to hold a BBQ with lean grilled meats and/or seafood and salads, with fruit salad and low-fat yoghurt for dessert, or hold a healthy morning or afternoon tea.

Prizes could be a fruit basket or vouchers for sports equipment, gym membership, drink bottles, t-shirt, gift certificates, caps or water glasses. You might like to approach local shops or companies to seek sponsorships of your event which could include providing prizes. Examples of business you could approach for sponsorship might include: local fruit and vegetable stores, sporting stores or gyms, beauty or massage salons, or health food stores. Avoid unhealthy products as prizes. Email info@measureup.gov.au if you would like to be sent a ‘Healthy Food Fast’ recipe book to use as a prize.

A special guest such as a local sporting identity, a GP or dietitian who can talk about the benefits of regular physical activity and good nutrition will add to the event.

Keep the local paper/media informed and invite them along to your celebration. Not only will you have contributed to a new enthusiasm for wellness in your workplace, you will be setting a great example for other businesses and groups in your community. Remember to always clear contact with the media with your management.

Resources you will need to organise for participants

- Pedometers
- Prizes
- Map of Workplace Walkathon destination
- Log sheets to record pedometer steps (a template is included in this toolkit).

Let the community know and email photos of your Workplace Walkathon to info@measureup.gov.au for the Measure Up website. Remember to seek permission from those in the photos before you send them on (see the [photo consent form](#)). Also fill in and send back the Workplace Walkathon Evaluation Form to let us know how your event went.

Launching the Workplace Walkathon

On the launch day of the walkathon, information packs and pedometers should be distributed to all staff who are taking part in the event.

A brief presentation should be given to staff explaining the rationale behind the event, how the event will work, prizes on offer, and what will happen at the end of the event. The presentation should be light-hearted and fun.

To coincide with the launch, you may wish have a healthy morning or afternoon tea. You could also invite a special guest or motivational speaker to encourage staff to participate in the event, and motivate them to put in the effort to do well.

Hosting the Walkathon

Each member of the team will wear a pedometer for the duration of the Walkathon to measure the number of steps they have taken. Participants will need to take note of their pedometer reading at the end of every day and record how many steps they did on a log sheet. At the end of each week (or other nominated time, depending on the distance of the walkathon, this may be daily) each person should report their number of steps to one person in the team (team coordinator) who will then pass on the total number of steps for their team to an event organiser. This nominated person will track all of the teams on the tracker poster. Participants will need to be reminded to reset their pedometers every morning.

The poster can be a map drawn to scale of the pre-determined distance the teams have to travel. Markers can then be used for each team to show how they have travelled based on their pedometer readings. There are approximately 2000 steps to the kilometre. This poster should be displayed in a common area where everyone can view it, such as a lounge area or kitchen. This can also serve as a visual reminder to make healthy food choices during the day.

Teams' progress should continue to be tracked until the completion of the walkathon, where the team who reached the destination first, or is closest to the destination is deemed the winner. The winner should be formally announced at the celebration event. You may also like to have other prizes for teams such as 'best team name', 'most enthusiastic team' etc.

Hosting the celebration event

The celebration event should be held as close to the completion of the walkathon as possible, preferably the same day or the following day, and should celebrate not only the winning team, but also what everyone has achieved by taking part in the walkathon.

A special guest speaker could be invited to talk to everyone about the benefits of keeping active and eating healthy food, they could also help to present the prizes.

People who take part might also like to contribute what they have gained by taking part, such as good fun, companionship with their workmates, improved productivity and most importantly better health.

A healthy BBQ lunch with lean grilled meats and/or seafood and salad could also be organised as part of the event, or a healthy morning or afternoon tea.

Alternative event ideas

If Workplace Walkathon is not right for your workplace, or you want to keep up the momentum after the Walkathon is over, there are many other ideas, including:

- Hold talks on healthy eating and improving activity levels to reduce the risk of lifestyle related chronic disease, by local guest speakers such as a dietitian, personal trainer or GP.
- Run a Healthy Cooking on a Budget competition, a Healthy BBQ cook-off or a Best Healthy Recipe competition. Look on the Measure Up website for our [Community Healthy BBQ Challenge Event Toolkit](#).
- Hold a healthy cooking demonstration given by a local chef, dietitian/nutritionist, or local celebrity.
- Hold a walkathon and raise funds for charity.
- Organise a healthy lunch day, where staff members bring in a healthy dish to share from home and have a healthy communal lunch.
- Introduce small workplace challenges for points, like: Go for 2 and 5 day, no junk food day, healthy morning tea day, take the stairs day, add 30 minutes of activity (or more!) day, take 10,000 steps day, or do an extra 500 steps per day.

Simply alter the Workplace Walkathon toolkit to meet your needs.

You could link your event to a community health day or week, like those identified below

Health months/weeks/days you can link your activities to:

February – World Cancer Day (4th)

March – World Kidney Day (13th)

April – World Health Day (7th), Arthritis Week (1st week)

May – National Heart Week (1st week), Kidney Awareness Week (last week of the month)

June – Bowel Cancer Awareness Week (2nd week), International Men's Health Week (2nd week)

July – National Diabetes Week (3rd week)

August – Breastfeeding Awareness Month, National Healthy Bones Week (1st week)

September – National Asthma Week, National Stroke Week (3rd week), World Heart Day

October – Walk to Work Day, World Food Day, National Nutrition Week, Ride to Work Day, World Osteoporosis Day

November – World Diabetes Day (14th)

You should also consider, implementing ongoing activities for your workplace to promote healthy eating and physical activity:

- Organise for some permanent changes to be made to your in-house café/canteen's menu – some fresh salads, salad wraps, low fat yogurts, fresh fruit salad cups etc to be available EVERY day.
- Pricing and promotions for healthier choices at workplace canteens and food outlets
- Introduce a weekly staff physical activity event for all staff to attend at the most suitable time eg. a before work walk from the office, a Friday lunch time yoga class, or an after work Monday touch football game.
- Promote the Heart Foundation walking groups in your local area, go to www.heartfoundation.org.au

What to do and when to do it – Preparation checklist

At least **eight weeks before** you would like to hold a walkathon, raise the idea with work mates, HR and management. Get people involved and interested. Seek approval and support from management. Often, if the idea is circulated from management, people will be more inclined to participate if management is shown to be supporting the initiative.

Six weeks before the walkathon, set a start and finish date. Set a date for the healthy lunch, morning tea, or afternoon tea celebration.

Six weeks before the start of the walkathon, purchase and/or arrange sponsorship of the pedometers, or organise where to hire these from.

Six weeks before your celebration event, select a venue for your celebration event (onsite or book a venue).

Five weeks before the start of the walkathon, set a virtual destination or ask staff to nominate a destination.

Five weeks before the start of the walkathon, arrange healthy prizes. Can management donate prizes? Can local physical activity or healthy food businesses donate prizes?

Five weeks before the event, invite a guest speaker to the celebration (see [invite a special guest – Letter template](#)).

Four weeks before the walkathon, make a poster about the event and send out fliers (see [staff flyer template](#)) to everyone at work inviting them to participate.

Four weeks before the start of the walkathon, make a poster identifying the map of your destination.

Three weeks before the start of the walkathon, organise teams.

Three weeks before the celebration event, arrange a healthy lunch, morning tea, or afternoon tea celebration, either with a BBQ, items brought in from home or organised through your cafe or local caterer.

One week before the celebration event, brief the guest speaker on what you have achieved and why you arranged the Workplace Walkathon. You should also give them a quick brief on the day of the event to make sure they are comfortable with what they are doing.

One week before the start of the walkathon, send a media release to your local paper/media (see [media release template](#)). With the approval of management, invite the local paper around to take a picture of the teams during the competition. Invite the local paper to attend the celebration.

One week before your celebration event, draw up a running sheet (see [running sheet template](#)) for your special day with timings and give a copy to organisers and guests to make sure it runs smoothly.