

# Guidance on Physical Activity in the Workplace (2013)

Workplace staff, contractors, and visitors who are able, are encouraged to be active in as many ways as possible while getting to and from work, and while at work.

**Active transport to and from work**

Staff who use active transport (ie, cycle or walk) in full or in part to get to and from work:

* take fewer sick days and have better health
* are more likely to arrive on time as they avoid traffic congestion and delayed buses/trains
* are more likely to be alert when they get to work
* are more likely to have increased job satisfaction
* are more cost effective for the workplace (Vitality Works 2012).

Where possible, workplaces should:

* promote and encourage the use of active transport to get to and from work
* provide adequate changing and showering facilities at all work premises
* provide adequate storage, lockers and drying facilities for sport and wet weather clothing
* provide sufficient secure bike parking at each work site.

**Physical activity at work**

There are numerous reasons for being active at work including better overall health, better self-esteem, more energy and productivity, and better weight management (Ministry of Health 2012).

Research highlights a link between an active workforce and cost saving outcomes, such as reduced absenteeism, reduced staff turnover, and improved productivity (Commonwealth Fund 2012; Workwell 2012).

During their working day, staff should be encouraged to be as active as possible, and reduce their time being sedentary. Sedentary behaviour, such as sitting at the computer for long periods of time without a break, is associated with many long term conditions such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, regardless of whether an individual is physically active or not (Schofield G et al. 2009).

Workplaces can encourage staff to:

1. use stairs rather than lifts
	* signs such as ‘there are health benefits from taking the stairs’ should be put up
	* the signs should clearly indicate where the stairwells are and what floor reception is on
	* stairwells should be accessible, well lit and clean
2. stand up to stretch regularly and when taking phone calls
3. stand during meetings and use standing tables where available
4. walk to meetings in nearby buildings rather than taking a taxi where possible
5. walk to colleagues instead of calling or emailing them where possible
6. have five minute activity breaks every hour during meetings
7. complete chair based exercises – [ACC work smart tips](http://www.worksmarttips.co.nz/choose-your-workplace/)
8. avoid scheduling meetings over the lunch period (12–2pm) to enable staff to be active
9. participate in sports teams, lunchtime walking and jogging groups, and events such as Walk 2 Work day and Bike to Work day

# References

Ministry of Health. 2012. *Keeping fit – keeping healthy.* URL: <http://www.health.govt.nz/yourhealth-topics/physical-activity/keeping-fit-keeping-healthy> Accessed 3 October 2013.

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The Commonwealth Fund. 2012. *Moving forward with wellness incentives under the Affordable Care Act: Lessons from Germany.* URL: <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Publications/Issue-Briefs/2012/May/Moving-Forward-with-Wellness-Incentives-Under-the-ACA.aspx> Accessed 3 October 2013.

Workwell. 2012. *Physical activity.* URL: <http://www.workwell.health.nz/workwell_physical-activity> Accessed 3 October 2013.

Vitality Works. 2012. *Wellness portal: no-cost ideas to reduce your sitting time at work.* URL: <http://www.wellnessportal.co.nz/feelgood/library/reduceyoursitting> Accessed 3 October 2013.