



Goal: Increase the use of the organization's stairwells.

Health Rationale: We are encouraged to perform at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity daily or 20 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity 3 or more days per week. However, most adults do not reach these recommendations¹. Adults can reduce their risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure, and improve their quality of life by adding a modest amount of physical activity to their day. One way to achieve daily physical activity is to take advantage of "lifestyle" activities that can be performed on an average day, such as walking instead of driving, and using the stairs instead of the elevators².

Action Steps:

1. Discuss the idea
 - Discuss your stairwell initiative with building management and/or building owner. Consider others who could partner in the initiative.
2. Check Stairwells
 - Assess the condition of your stairwells. Consider any maintenance issues that may need to be addressed before hanging up the posters.
 - Decide what improvements are feasible for your organization.
3. Involve Management
 - We encourage you to find a champion at your company to lead the campaign, preferably the CEO or Senior Management
4. Improve your StairWELL
 - Ensure that your stairwell is clean and well lit. Other improvement ideas are provided in later sections of this document.
5. Announce StairWELL launch
 - Hang Point of Decision Prompt posters near elevators and stairs.
 - Hang Motivational Posters inside stairwells.
 - Do an internal rally to launch the initiative. Communicate the goal to participants. Let employees know they will receive weekly e-mails and reminders about the program and promote incentives.
 - Find cheerleaders and champions and put them in positions where they can encourage others.
 - Do an email and/or employee website launch.

¹ Adams MA, Hovell, MF, Irvin V, Sallis JF, et al. Promoting stair use by modeling : An experimental application of the behavioral ecological model. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2006;21:101-109.

Safe Walking Routes

Safe walking routes can be a big motivation for employees to incorporate more physical activity into their day. Walking routes provide an alternative to the StairWELL Initiative for businesses who do not have stairs. They can also be a great complementary activity to your StairWELL Initiative.

Distance markers installed around safe walking areas, such as parking lots, encourage tracking of walking time and/or distance. In a large office building, measure and map an inside walking route(s) for both long (30 minutes) and short (10 minutes) walking breaks during inclement weather.

Action Steps:

1. Choose a Coordinator
2. Determine a safe area for employees to walk. This could be within the employee parking lot, or a nearby neighborhood. If you choose a nearby community you may want to a “Walkability Checklist” to evaluate your potential walking route:
www.bikemaine.org/pdfs/walkingchecklist.pdf
3. Use a measuring wheel (a device that can be rolled along the ground and the distance that is traveled is displayed on a dial). The local recreation department or police department may have a measuring wheel you can borrow.
4. If acceptable, make notations on the path. Note distances within a company owned parking lot by painting on the lot surface . Post distances on the walls inside the building for the indoor walking routes.

In 2007 Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in South Portland, ME conducted a StairWELL Campaign. Here are some photos from that effort.



Photographs by Anthem BCBS employees were hung in the StairWELLS



A mural painted in the StairWELL by an Anthem BCBS employee

Employee Testimonials

Before the StairWELL challenge, I didn't even know where the stairs were in the building. The challenge of climbing Mt. Everest, and the ability to contribute steps toward a goal, was highly motivating. Now that the challenge has ended, I still use the stairs everyday. Going up and down several flights a day is a small step toward better health, but it has been the impetus for other, bigger changes; I was inspired to start walking a few nights a week, to join a kickball league, and to start eating better. ~**UWGP Employee**

The StairWELL campaign changed my habits beyond nine-to-five. When I started taking the stairs every morning, I quickly found reasons to leave the building and get some exercise a few times a day. Thinking about healthy choices at work changed some of the decisions I make at home. Now I'm more likely to pass on dessert or rethink portion sizes at meals, and I make a concerted effort to walk and run at night and on weekends more than I did just a few months ago. ~**UWGP Employee**

"I really have enjoyed the break from my desk mid-morning and mid-afternoon and I'm finding that after starting this, I seem to get less and less winded as the days go by. I don't know who came up with the idea but it's a good one." ~**UNUM Employee**

"Every morning around 10 a.m., I climb the stairways from the ground floor to the fifth floor. I do it two times, and I try to push myself to do it faster each day. I have not missed a day since the program started. The benefits I derived from this routine are improved cardiovascular health, some loss of weight and a general overall feeling of well-being and health. It has inspired me to walk in the morning before I leave for work. I have also noticed that it gives me more energy for my work day." ~**UNUM Employee**

