

WALKING CHALLENGE

There's never been a better time to get moving.

Why offer a walking challenge?

The goal of the University of Missouri's [Culture of Health Initiative](#) is to educate, inspire, and empower faculty and staff to achieve healthy minds and bodies by creating a healthy work environment. To that end, the Culture of Health advances five priority areas: **be active, eat well, work-life fit, work healthy, and empower and appreciate.**

Walking challenges fulfill both the **be active** and **empower and appreciate** priority areas by helping to get employees moving and support one another. Healthy for Life offers a walking challenge toolkit to encourage departments to create their own walking challenges.

In addition to the health benefits associated with walking more, walking challenges can also improve productivity and morale. A 2014 study from Stanford University¹ found that taking a short walking break significantly boosted creativity. That increase in creativity was sustained even after going back to sitting. Other studies have found that walking improves focus, self-control, and decision making while reducing stress, depression, and anxiety. Department walking challenges can also be tremendously effective at building office morale through the use of encouragement and recognition. The benefits of walking challenges contribute to a more productive and positive work environment.

WHAT CAN I DO AS A MANAGER?

- Provide support to your employees who have decided to start a walking challenge. Or, lead the way and ask a few employees to help you put on a challenge. With so many benefits, it's always a good time to say "yes" to a walking challenge!
- Encourage participation on the job-- break times, mail runs, parking further away, taking the stairs, or using a restroom on another floor are all great ways to get extra steps during the work day.
- Be a role-model. Your participation in a challenge can be a great way to get employees motivated. Be creative with incentives and other forms of recognition (but sometimes bragging rights alone can be enough)! For ideas, see the "Step-by-step guide to hosting a walking challenge" document on our [walking toolkit webpage](#).

¹Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014). Give your ideas some legs: The positive effect of walking on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 40(4), 1142-1152. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/xlm-a0036577.pdf>

