

# Improving Worksite Stairwells

*The following suggestions can help your employees enjoy the benefits of physical activity. Simply taking the stairs on a regular basis can make a difference in the energy level and vitality of your workforce.*



Wouldn't it be great if there was a way for you and your coworkers to be active during the day without having to pay for a gym membership or even having to leave your worksite?

Well, there is. Surprisingly enough, those underutilized stairwells at your worksite are an inexpensive and effective way to add physical activity into anyone's daily routine. By simply climbing up or down a few flights of stairs every day on your way to lunch or in between meetings, you will strengthen your heart, muscles, and bones without having to miss a beat during your busy workday.

This resource provides you with the information you need to spruce up your worksite's stairwells and motivate and encourage all employees to utilize them in an effort to improve overall health and well-being, as well as your bottom line.

## STAIRWELL BASICS

In order to make the most of your worksite's stairwells and to ensure an enjoyable passage for all who use them, make sure that the following basic elements are in place:

- The stairwells need to be safe, with controlled access from the outside.
- Stairwells should be well-lit with good visibility (including mirrors and video cameras if needed).
- Stairwells should be well constructed and maintained, equipped with non-slip or non-skid treads, and cleaned regularly.

## CREATING ATTRACTIVE AND INVITING STAIRWELLS

Once you have established that your worksite's stairwells are equipped with the basics, it is time to think outside of the box and come up with inventive and interesting ways of making the stairs the most appealing choice for employees. In order to do this, consider implementing any or all of the following ideas:

- Post motivational signs and prompts at elevators that encourage employees to take the stairs. Visit [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell/motivational\\_signs.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell/motivational_signs.htm) to obtain sample signs that have been tested and found to be effective. See examples below:



- Add inspirational and informative quotes, messages, rhymes, or jingles on walls or stair risers.

- *Examples:*

- That's one small step for me. One giant leap toward good health.
- Do some reps... take the steps.
- For a better today and a healthier tomorrow.
- Physical activity will add years to your life, and life to your years.
- Raise your fitness level one step at a time.
- Sneak activity into your daily routine.
- Step up to a healthier lifestyle.
- Small steps make a big difference.
- The cheapest gym anywhere... the stairs!
- The victory is not always to the swift, but to those who keep moving.
- There are 1440 minutes in every day...schedule 30 of them for physical activity.
- Your heart needs exercise. Here's your chance.
- We are what we repeatedly do. (Aristotle)



- Provide popular music in the stairwells.
- Paint/decorate stairwells in pleasing colors and attractive designs, as permitted by your worksite. Consider utilizing artwork, painted murals, photographs, or other items that capture interest or spark curiosity.

- *Examples:*

- Paint/decorate your stairwell in a "forest" theme. Complete it with natural music such as the sound of waterfalls or birds chirping.
- Organize a contest where employees submit photographs they have taken and decorate the stairwells with the winning entries.

- Make sure to rotate or change messages, artwork, or music regularly to maintain interest.
- Carpet stairwells or have floor coverings that are attractive and minimize noise.
- Rename the stairwells as "the fitness zone." Utilize that name/theme on all promotional items (e.g., put up signs on the outside of the stairwells that say "YOU ARE ENTERING THE FITNESS ZONE").
- Add footsteps that lead from the elevators to the stairs and have a message spelled out along the way.

## ENCOURAGING STAIRWELL USE

Now that your worksite's stairwells are equipped with the basics and they are attractive and inviting, how do you get more employees to actually use them? Here are some ideas for encouraging stairwell use at your worksite:

- Promote stairwell use as a way to maintain every day activity levels and achieve weight loss, fitness, or competitive goals. Also, encourage all levels of your organization to model these behaviors and support one another.
- Organize stairwell events or competitions to maintain fun, camaraderie, and motivation. Consider implementing creative, team-based stairwell challenges that use the imagination and the stairs to “climb a mountain” or a favorite landmark (e.g., Mt. Whitney, Mt. Everest, or the Empire State Building). Provide goal setting worksheets or activity logs for employees to keep track of their progress. A sample form can be found at [www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/fitbusinesskit](http://www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/fitbusinesskit).
- Provide employees with prizes and incentives for reaching goals and milestones. Keep in mind that something as simple as a ribbon, certificate, or a colorful wristband could be recognized as a symbol of peer support and recognition, as well as pride in personal achievement. Fellow employees/teams can also volunteer to provide simple prizes for the winning team of the stairwell competition. A sample prize coupon form can be found at [www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/fitbusinesskit](http://www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/fitbusinesskit).
- Team up with colleagues to start a “Stairwell Club.” Encourage the club to take the stairs during morning and afternoon breaks or during the lunch hour as a way of fitting in physical activity during the workday.

## SAFETY FIRST!

Stairwells are a great place to be physically active, but it's important to use caution. Here are a few tips to remember:

- Advise employees to consult with their doctors before increasing the amount or intensity of physical activity or beginning a vigorous exercise program.
- Always use the handrail.
- Keep your eyes on the stairs at all times.
- Take one step at a time.
- Never stop on a landing to converse with someone or congregate right outside a door at the top or bottom of a stairwell.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) StairWELL to Better Health Program Web site at [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell) for more ideas.
- Visit Health Canada's Web site at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-avs/english/planning.htm](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-avs/english/planning.htm) for more ideas on events or competitions.

## ATTRIBUTES

Physical Activity and Nutrition Coordinating Committee (PANCC), Issue Memo — Promoting Stairwell Use in the East End Complex, California Department of Public Health internal/unreleased document, 2003.

CDC StairWELL to Better Health Program, Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell/](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/stairwell/).

