

Burleigh County Pilots Treadmill Desk to Increase Employees' Physical Activity

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A National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program Success Story

Summary

Lack of physical activity is a major risk factor for developing some cancers. The North Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program collaborated with the North Dakota Department of Health's Nutrition and Physical Activity Division to motivate employers and partners to increase physical activity in the workplace. Burleigh County installed a treadmill desk for sedentary employees without access to its wellness program. Their average number of steps increased from 1,634 steps per shift at baseline to 7,190 steps 1 year after the pilot ended.



Challenge

Most of the 600 employees in North Dakota's Burleigh County are enrolled in a comprehensive wellness initiative that provides education, screening, nutrition and physical activity programs during the traditional workday hours. The wellness initiative encourages the adoption of healthy behaviors to reduce an employee's risk of developing some cancers and other chronic diseases. Unfortunately, these program resources were not available to the other county employees, particularly the dispatch communications staff who worked nontraditional shifts and had sedentary duties.

Solution

The Burleigh County wellness coordinator installed a treadmill desk for dispatch communications staff to use during their shifts during a pilot phase from October 2015 to June 2016. Before the desk was installed, participating employees wore fitness trackers to log their daily steps.

After the desk was installed, employees then recorded steps during the pilot to compare the two figures. Burleigh County employees signed up for 1-hour periods to use the treadmill desk. More employees participated after they witnessed weight loss among their colleagues who used the treadmill desk. Polled staff indicated benefits such as improved focus and reduced stress in a post-pilot evaluation.

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To learn more about the National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/ncccp.



NATIONAL
**Comprehensive
Cancer Control**
PROGRAM

Collaborating to Conquer Cancer

Results

Before the pilot, staff averaged only 1,634 steps per 12 hour shift. After 3 months of treadmill desk access, the average number of steps more than tripled with a 321% increase. At 18 months post-implementation and nearly 1 year after the pilot ended, the average steps per shift was 7,190—an increase of 440% over baseline.

“During a 12-hour work day, sitting or standing in the same place can wear on a person. When I use the treadmill, just 20 to 30 minutes, I feel refreshed, more focused, and less stressed. The treadmill has been a great addition.”

- **Brendan Hanken**
Burleigh County Dispatch



Future Directions

The North Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program and its chronic disease partners continue to collaborate on innovative ways to use worksites to improve access to physical activity to prevent some cancers and other chronic diseases.

Multiple workgroups address access to care, worksite wellness program development, and projects that provide technical assistance to worksites.

They also develop wellness policies and coordinate future programs. Cancer programs, chronic disease programs, and external partners share these cross-cutting priorities and meet regularly to provide ongoing opportunities for training, strategizing, and collaboration.

The addition of the treadmill increased healthy behaviors and improved morale. Burleigh County’s Director of Communications supported the strategy but, because of limited resources, had to use funds from other sources to buy an additional permanent standing treadmill desk for employees’ use after the pilot.

Your Involvement is Key

North Dakota’s coordinated approach benefited Department of Health employees and is being adopted by external partners like Bismarck Burleigh Public Health, which is implementing worksite-based cancer and chronic disease prevention programs for its employees. For information on wellness promotion at your worksite, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/index.html>.

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