

# MCPS Employee Wellness Program

## April Wellness eNews

Welcome to the April issue of Employee Wellness eNews!

Read on to learn about—

- strategies for fitting exercise into your busy day;
- how this month's wellness champions are dancing their way to better health; and
- the health rewards of walking.



### Wellness Champions

**Meet Sandra Quinonez and Cristina Romero, Shady Grove North Depot Bus Operators**

Sandra Quinonez and Cristina Romero, bus operators from the Shady Grove North Depot, are inspiring their coworkers to dance their way to better health. Sandy and Cristina worked together to initiate dance aerobics at their depot as well as other depot locations. Teaching fitness courses is a challenge in the Department of Transportation because of the cultural, fitness, and age diversity, but Sandy and Cristina model both high and low intensity exercise so all levels can participate. Despite the challenges, they have built a successful fitness program. Both have used their personal time and resources in the interest of their peers. They have prioritized health and made the time to brainstorm ways to make it a fun and enjoyable atmosphere with contagious, upbeat music.

### Don't miss it!

#### Weight Training for Weight Loss

**April 12, 2011**  
4:00–5:00 p.m.  
**Seneca Valley High School**  
19401 Crystal Rock Dr.  
Germantown, MD 20874

**April 28, 2011**  
4:30–5:30 p.m.  
**Carver Educational Services Center (CESC) Auditorium**  
850 Hungerford Dr.  
Rockville, MD 20855

*Presented by:*



## Fitting in Exercise

**Think you have no time to exercise? These strategies will help you get fit in just minutes a day.**

We all know exercise can help us improve our health and lose weight. Yet, 25 percent of adults don't exercise at all, according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Hectic schedules may be to blame. But you only need to find a few minutes a day to start getting the health benefits. First, check with your doctor before you start or increase your activity level.

### Tips for fitting in fitness

- **Change into exercise clothes before leaving work.** You'll be ready for a short walk as soon as you get home.
- **Move while you watch TV.** Don't sit idly—or worse, get a snack—during commercials. Do sit-ups or jog in place instead.
- **Play games with your kids.** Don't just watch while your kids play outside—join in their fun. Play tag or Duck Duck Goose, or just toss a ball back and forth. If your kids love video games, think about swapping their console for the Nintendo Wii. The whole family will break a sweat using special controllers to compete at boxing, tennis, golf, and bowling.
- **Exercise while you work.** Raise your activity level and productivity with neck rolls or arm raises (push hands out to the side and then up toward the ceiling). Or do a few modified push-ups on the edge of your desk.

Next time you look for an excuse to skip exercise, remind yourself of the benefits. You're helping yourself feel good, look better, and live longer. Who wouldn't want that?

Material adapted with permission from "9 Ways to Exercise...When You Don't Have the Time." [www.uhctools.com/t4w\\_getup\\_go2](http://www.uhctools.com/t4w_getup_go2) (March 15, 2011).

## Walk Your Way to Better Fitness

Most of us walk everyday without even thinking about it. But did you know that walking also can be an integral part of your fitness routine?

Walking doesn't just help improve the way you look—it also can improve the way you feel. By introducing a regular walking routine into your schedule, you may experience positive changes such as the following:



- Reduced blood cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
- Increased cardiovascular endurance
- Stronger bones
- Calories burned and weight lost

### Getting started

It is important to start each workout with a few easy stretches to loosen up the muscles. Walking in place for a few minutes is a good way to get your blood flowing. You should also stretch your back, shoulders, and arms since these muscles will be used during your workout.

**Tip:** When getting dressed for walking, be sure to layer comfortable, loose clothes. Once your blood starts pumping, you may need to remove a layer. Shoes are important, too—those designed for walking are best.

### Getting going

The Surgeon General, as well as The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recommends 30 minutes of activity at least five days per week at a moderate intensity level. This time can be spread out during different parts of the day if you are unable to fit it in all at once. Keep these helpful hints in mind when walking:



- Walk short distances. Begin with a five-minute walk and gradually increase your distance.
- Speed is not important. Maintain a comfortable pace.
- Focus on good posture. Keep your shoulders down, back and relaxed. Hold your head up and your eyes forward. Tighten your abdominal muscles and buttocks and adopt a natural stride.
- Move your arms naturally and take deep breaths. If you have trouble catching your breath, slow down.
- Be sure you can talk while walking. If you can't hold a conversation, you are walking too fast.
- When ending your walk, slow the pace and stretch well afterwards.

### Creating goals

Once you get into the habit of fitness walking, you may want to think about what you are trying to accomplish. Below are some general guidelines to keep in mind:

- **General Health:** Try to walk for 30 minutes a day, several days a week. Sustain a pace that causes elevated breathing but still allows a conversation.
- **Improve Cardiovascular Fitness:** Walk 3 to 4 days a week for 20 to 30 minutes at a rapid pace. You should be breathing hard but not gasping for air.
- **Weight Loss:** Walk at least five days a week for 45 to 60 minutes. Keep a brisk pace.

### Learn More

For more helpful tips on how to integrate walking into your daily routine, see UnitedHealthcare's [walking brochure](#).

Material adapted with permission from "Tread Well, Feel Better." [www.uhctools.com/assets/100-8478%20Tread%20Well.pdf](http://www.uhctools.com/assets/100-8478%20Tread%20Well.pdf) (Mar. 15, 2011).

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Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact the wellness program at 301-517-8100 or [wellness@mcpsmd.org](mailto:wellness@mcpsmd.org).