

# Stairwell Initiative

The purpose of the Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative is to provide tools for Maine employers to improve employee health by implementing a StairWELL initiative within their organization. This kit also provides options for businesses that do not have stairwells, including links to tools to help map out walking paths around worksites and additional resources to help promote physical activity in the workplace to all employees. As with any health promotion program that is centered on physical activity it is important to remind employees to check with their doctor before starting any new type of physical activity program.

The Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative is based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) program, "StairWELL to Better Health" ([www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/stairwell/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/stairwell/index.htm)). Stairwells represent an important opportunity to increase daily physical activity because of low personal cost and convenience.

Point of decision prompts and motivational signs that encourage stair use are a great way to promote your initiative. Placing signs at the places where people have a choice between the stairs and the elevator is a key aspect of encouraging people to use the stairs. It will also remind employees that there are stairs for them to use! Each organization is different, however, and messages that motivate some may not be motivating to others. It is important to consider your audience, and tailor the messages accordingly.

The Let's Go! StairWELL packet contains ready to use materials that can be used to take advantage of a worksite's built environment as a way to promote and encourage physical activity during the work day:

- "How to" tips
- Promotional Ideas
- Sample e-mails
- Point of Decision Prompt Posters (Left and Right Arrows)
- Motivational Posters



[www.lets-go.org](http://www.lets-go.org)

## StairWELL Initiative

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### **APPENDIX**

- Let's Go! Point of Decision Prompt Posters
- Let's Go! StairWELL Posters (Left/Right Arrows)
- Let's Go! Parking Lot Sign

**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 recommendations<sup>1</sup>. 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 elevators<sup>2</sup>.

### **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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **Don't Own Your Building? How to work with your property management company**

### **Things to Consider:**

- Schedule a meeting with your management company.
- Bring to the meeting examples of how this program has been implemented at other managed properties (example: MaineHealth, United Way).
- Are your stairwells locked?
- Seek other tenants' buy-in to the program.
- Learn about acceptable signage and the parameters/restrictions.

### **What if my business does not have stairs or an employee is unable to take the stairs?**

- Designate a Let's Go! parking area and hang signs.
- Challenge employees to park farther away for the extra walk.
- Provide prizes to employees who are "caught" parking in the long distance lot.
- Encourage employees to take a 10-minute walking break during the day.
- Encourage employees to have walking meetings.
- Challenge employees to create their own departmental activity.
- Calculate average distances around the office and let employees know how much physical activity they are fitting into their day.
- Create walking routes inside or outside your building.

## 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](http://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.

## Promotional Ideas

Promoting your activities is a key step in the successful implementation of the Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative. It is the element that informs and gets employees excited. Be creative and have fun! See also our sample emails to use for promoting your StairWELL initiative.

### Who?

- Involve management and informal leaders. Leverage participation by appointing honorary chairpersons and champions within your organization.

### What?

- Designate a central location where employees can learn and access program information.
- Post weekly handouts on a bulletin board in high traffic areas.
- Offer incentives to participants.
- Schedule a speaker. Arrange for a fitness expert or an active employee who has had success with similar exercise programs to share their stories.
- Create a Let's Go! bulletin board. Post parent handouts and community events that promote physical activities.
- Post pictures of short, quick activities in front of the copier, fax, and computer.
- Plan special event days: Walk/Bike to Work day, Sneaker Day, Walking Meeting Day.
- Create a designated Let's Go! parking area further away from your building. Calculate the distance and let employees know how much physical activity they are fitting in to their day.
- Artwork Challenge: Have employees or employee's children create artwork for the stairwells and ask employees to vote for their favorite.
- Hold a grand re-opening of your StairWELL.
- Create stair climbing challenges. Create an image of a fixed climb on a poster and track employees progress (i.e. Mount Everest = 29,000 feet or 5.5 miles Mount Fuji = 12,388 feet, or 2.3 miles) 2000 steps is equal to 1 mile.

### When?

- Take advantage of company-wide or departmental meetings, luncheons etc.
- Send out weekly e-mails to employees. Post reminders on your employee website.

### Where?

- Pick some "hot spots". Identify high traffic areas in your building (break rooms, cafeterias, etc.) to display promotional materials. Make sure contact information is easily found on all materials.

## Let's Go! Messages on Point of Decision Prompts and Motivational Posters

- Add steps to your day the easy way. Park further, walk more.
- Free Stair Master here.
- Burn calories. Take the stairs.
- Race the elevator.
- Door to a stronger heart.
- This way to burn off last night's dessert.
- Your hips will thank you.
- Walk off that whoopie pie here.
- Walk off last night's chocolate temptation.
- Abandon all excess calories, ye who enter here.
- Free gym.
- Feel stressed? Burn some steam.
- Free activity program.
- Steps this way.
- Lower your blood pressure.
- No waiting. Steps this way.
- Have you had any activity today?
- Walking up stairs burns 4 times more calories than riding the elevator.
- No waiting. One door over.
- Raise your fitness level one step at a time.
- No time for activity? Your opportunity is now.
- Don't just stand there...take the stairs!
- Take a stroll.
- Walk this way.
- Take a lap.
- Lost your thought? Take a lap.
- Take a walking break.
- Take a break. Take a lap.

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



Redy is painted several times along Anthem BCBS' walking trail

## 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**

## Sample emails

### What?

Sample emails are provided for your organizations to use as a guide and/or template to create emails or employee website announcements that help promote the Let's Go! StairWELL initiative and healthy lifestyles.

### Why?

Successful initiatives promote awareness of the campaign and encourage employee participation. By using existing resources such as newsletters or e-news communications, organizations can effectively market the campaign with minimal cost.

### How?

Weekly e-mails to employees are an easy, effective way to achieve visibility and scope. Send emails to your employees once a week, and set a goal of sending your emails on the same day of the week for the duration of the program (12 weeks). Also post updates on your employee website, if you have one.

### When?

The first email should be sent out the week that the Point of Decision Prompt posters and motivational signs are posted in your building.

## Week One: Introduction

**Goal:** To Introduce the Let's Go! Campaign and StairWELL Initiative to employees.

CEO/Senior Management may want to insert personal thoughts and feelings as to why the company became involved in the Let's Go! campaign and the importance of the company/organization being a leader in the community.

### Sample Email Content:

**Let's Go!** is a community-based initiative to promote healthy lifestyle choices for children, youth and families in 12 Greater Portland communities. Our goal is to increase physical activity and healthy eating for children and youth ages 0 – 18.

**Let's Go!** recognizes that families play an integral role in creating healthy lifestyles for youth. A stairwell campaign is a simple and easy **first step** that will promote the benefits of physical activity with employees and their families.

Take the first step! By making small changes in your daily routine like taking the stairs or walking at work you can start living an active, healthy life! Each time you take the stairs or go for a walk you are making a decision to be active!

Check out [www.letsgo.org](http://www.letsgo.org) for other ideas to help you become more physically active.

## Week Two: Encouragement

**Goal:** To promote awareness of the Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative and encourage employee participation by promoting health benefits. Update on company challenge.

### Sample Email Content:

Take small steps to help make health a priority. Small changes make a big difference over time! Incorporate the stairs (or walking) into activities you would be doing anyway. If you need to go to a different floor, use the stairs. Take the long way to the restroom and take a flight each way. Studies have shown that people are most likely to stick to exercise when it is part of their daily routine. Get started today!

Along with its benefits to the heart, walking:

- improves circulation
- helps breathing
- combats depression
- bolsters the immune system
- helps prevent osteoporosis
- helps prevent and control diabetes

American Heart Association: Physical Activity in Your Daily Life:  
[www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2155](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2155)

## Week Three: Let's Go! at Work

**Goal:** To promote awareness of the Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative and encourage employee to increase physical activity during the day. Update on CEO Challenge: Has CEO been "caught" in the elevator? How high have they "climbed"?

### Sample E-mail Content:

Don't waste time waiting for the elevator, use the stairs! Challenge yourself to take the stairs all day today. If it is not possible to use the stairs, challenge yourself to pick two new ways this week to increase your physical activity during the work day:

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Schedule a walking meeting with co-workers.
- Stand and/or stretch while talking on the telephone.
- Rather than using the telephone, walk down the hall to speak with someone.
- Walk around your building, stretch your muscles.
- Park in the farthest parking spot and walk the rest of the way.

FitDay is a free, online calorie counter and weight loss journal. Find out how many calories are burned while engaging in different types of activity, from climbing the stairs to making copies.

[www.fitday.com/WebFit/burned/calories\\_burned.html](http://www.fitday.com/WebFit/burned/calories_burned.html)

## Week Four: Motivation

**Goal:** To encourage the participants of Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative to incorporate physical activity into other times during their day.

### Sample Email Content:

Stair climbing and other small bursts of physical activity at work can be accumulated across the course of the day, making a significant contribution to the recommended daily amount of 30 minutes (or more) of daily physical activity!

### 5 Easy Ways to Enjoy Physical Activity at Work:

- **Walk up (and down) stairs:** If you have a choice, always take the stairs. If you have stairs, take as many trips up and down as possible.
- **Walk around the office or building:** There's no need to sit still while you talk on the phone or think. Pacing and fidgeting are physical activity. Sometimes a face-to-face talk is the best way to communicate (and it gets you up and moving around).
- **Wear a pedometer at work:** Since every step counts, wearing a pedometer is wonderful motivator to walk more during your workday.

CDC Tips for Being More Active: [www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/tips.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/life/tips.htm)

## Week Five: Encourage each other

**Goal:** To keep the StairWELL Initiative visible, and challenge employees to use the stairs all day this week!

### Sample Email Content:

Think about how others have helped you adopt new behaviors. Support and encouragement from someone may have made a difference in your efforts. You have been making progress through the transition of adding physical activity into your daily life by using the stairs and walking more during the work day. You know it can be both hard and rewarding! Share your skills with someone else. Having others depend on you will increase your likelihood of continued success.

Encourage employees/departments to challenge each other to a “stair climbing contest” or “walking break challenge”

Have them name their group and award a prize to the most unique name

Each group should set an agreed upon goal (so many stairs in so many weeks, or so many miles in so many weeks) and the first group to reach the goal gets a prize

Highlight the competition among these groups to other employees (ex. “The Stair Steppers from Department A have challenged the Stair Climbers to see who can climb 500 flights first.”).

The National Women’s Health Information Center provides information on physical activity and other topics related to women’s health: <http://www.4women.gov/>

## Week Six: Keep Moving!

**Goal:** To keep employees involved in the campaign and make it an ongoing lifestyle change. Update on employee challenge from week 5, if appropriate.

### Sample Email Content:

This is week six of the Let’s Go! Stairwell Campaign and we hope that using the stairs is now becoming a part of your daily routine. Walking improves your health and your mood and is good for you heart. Remember:

- Walking helps you lose weight.
- Walking helps lower your blood pressure.
- Walking gives you more energy.
- Walking helps relieve stress.
- Walking helps you sleep better.

Science-based advice on weight control, getting stronger muscles and bones, and balanced nutrition: [www.healthierus.gov](http://www.healthierus.gov)

## Week Seven: Park and Walk!

**Goal:** To encourage the participants of Let's Go! StairWELL Initiative to employees to challenge themselves by parking further away in a designated Let's Go! Parking area.

### Sample Email Content:

Challenge Yourself! Park in the lot furthest from your building. Employees who get caught parking in the designated Let's Go! Parking area will receive a \$ gift certificate to XX. By the end of the week just by parking farther away you will have XX distance (or XX steps).

Remember to keep it simple! Even brief bursts of activity, like a 10-minute walk, can improve your concentration, creativity and performance!

You can easily monitor your progress with a pedometer. All these small steps do add up! 2000 steps is the equivalent of one mile. Check out the following links for more information on pedometers and walking routes.

Walking routes offer a safe and fun way to get active in your community. Find a walking route in your community and bring the family! Visit the Healthy Maine Walks Registry for more information about walking routes all over Maine: [www.healthymainewalks.org/](http://www.healthymainewalks.org/)

## Week Eight: Walking Routes

**Goal:** Encourage employees to leverage other opportunities during their day to incorporate physical activity.

### Sample Email Content:

- Do a little bit more, a little more often! Walk around the building before you go to your car. Invite a co-worker for a walk during lunch. Make an appointment for yourself and your health! Schedule time in your day to take a walk. Start with 10-15 minutes a day.
- During a ten minute walk, a 150 lb person burns 44 calories walking at a moderate pace (3 mph).
- Gradually build up the time spent doing the activity by adding a few minutes every few days until you can comfortably perform the minimum recommended amount of activity (30 minutes per day).
- Walking is a great way to start being active more often!
- Once you start looking for opportunities to walk, you will be amazed at how many there are.

Type in an address and click a path along nearby streets. The website will calculate distances for you: <http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/>

## Week Nine: Eat Right! Be Active!

**Goal:** To challenge employees to “step up” their program and promote healthy choices.

**Sample Email Content:**

Challenge employees to answer a trivia question about physical activity or nutrition via email. The first employee who answers correctly gets a healthy prize.

My Pyramid offers a detailed assessment of your food intake and physical activity level choices:  
[www.mypyramid.gov/index.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/index.html)

## Week Ten: Friends and Families

**Goal:** To encourage employees to keep “climbing” and bring Let’s Go! home to their friends and families.

**Sample Email Content:**

Now that you have been taking steps to become more physically active by using the stairs and walking at work, encourage your friends and family to do the same. Make getting more physical activity a family project. Encourage everyone to think of fun things to do to get up and moving!

- Celebrate family occasions with a walk or hike.
- Get outside and play.
- Bike to your children’s sporting events.
- Walk the dog.
- Encourage your family to use the stairs whenever possible.
- Post an activity log and keep track of your family’s progress.

Make Family Time Active Time!: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/family-time.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/family-time.htm)

## Week Eleven: Steps in the Right Direction

**Goal:** Encourage employees to continue to think about physical activity in new ways and reflect on the progress of the StairWELL Initiative.

### Sample Email Content:

Try to continue to work activity into all areas of your daily life by setting realistic goals. You now have begun to realize that activity doesn't have to take up a lot of time in your day or a lot of planning. You can continue to significantly increase physical activity by continuing to take small steps.

It's essential to be realistic about what you can do--either because you're busy, or because you simply haven't been active in quite a while. Some examples of realistic goals:

- Add 15 minutes of activity to your daily routine--whether it's walking, playing with the kids, swimming, or another activity that you enjoy.
- When given the choice between walking or driving, choose walking!
- Remember to use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park further away from the store.
- Walk the kids home from school or activities.

Write down your goal and give yourself a timeframe to accomplish that goal. The timeframe is very important and will help you monitor and celebrate your successes!

Find the best bike trails in your community: [www.bikemaine.org/trails/](http://www.bikemaine.org/trails/)

## Week Twelve: We've Come a Long Way!

**Goal:** Remind employees how far they have "climbed" and encourage continued participation. Acknowledge employee participation.

### Sample Email Content:

Hopefully by being more physically active during your daily living activities you have realized that you don't have to be a marathon runner or mountain climber to reap the benefits. Little things add up!

Tips for including physical activity in your everyday routine:

- Develop a simple routine — perhaps something you can do while you watch TV.
- Include indoor and outdoor housework in your plan. It all counts!
- For short journeys try walking instead of driving.
- Include active hobbies in your leisure time—walking, hiking, biking, snowshoeing.
- Make active living part of your family life. Go for a walk, play catch, walk the dog.
- Adopting a healthier lifestyle can be hard at first, but one step at a time makes it easier every day.
- Many people get active and then decide they'd like to lose weight or stop smoking. One thing does lead to the next.

Hannaford created Guiding Stars to give you a quick, at-a-glance tool to help find the most nutritious foods: [www.hannaford.com/Contents/Healthy\\_Living/Guiding\\_Stars/index.shtml](http://www.hannaford.com/Contents/Healthy_Living/Guiding_Stars/index.shtml)