



Developing Walking Clubs

Walking clubs are a fun and easy way to increase physical activity for members of your church. Below are some guidelines to help you organize walking clubs, but feel free to be creative and add or take away things to customize it for your church's members. Don't be limited by what we have described here.

1. Promotion is the key!

Advertise your walking program:

- Have your Pastor announce it from the pulpit.
- Put up signs in a highly visible place.
- Place an announcement in the bulletin.
- Make a walking program bulletin board and keep it updated with walking club news.
- Be sure to emphasize that people of all ages and abilities are welcome.

2. Forming clubs

- Once you have interest, encourage people with similar schedules and abilities to form a club.
- Clubs can meet as infrequently as once a week, or as often as 3 or 4 times a week.
- Clubs can decide whether they will meet to walk formally as a group, or will walk on their own most of the time and just meet occasionally to walk as a group.

3. Sign them up

- Using the Walking Club Tracking List, have clubs provide their club name, contact information, and number of members.
- Be sure that the contact person for the group has the monthly walking log, and will give copies of it to all of the members of the club.

4. Safety first

- Screen participants for safety using the Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) and the PAR-Q Facilitator Screening Tool.
- Give all of the club members the "Walking: A Step in the Right Direction" brochure.
- Stress walking in pairs or groups for safety.
- Encourage those with chronic health conditions to talk with their healthcare provider before starting a walking program.
- For participants with high blood pressure or diabetes, provide them with *"Safety Tips for Physical Activity Participation with Diabetes or High Blood Pressure."*

5. Keep them interested

- By using pedometers, clubs can set goals about how many steps they take in a week or month, individually or as a group.
- Use the "Walk a Mile in Your Own Shoes" for members using pedometers to determine how far they have traveled!
- Measure the distance from the church to points in the community, so that members can meet at the church, and decide on a distance to walk. Consider marking off every $\frac{1}{2}$ mile for miles 1,2,3,4, and 5. Note landmarks at each of these points, and then make a list and post it in the church.
- If you have a walking club bulletin board, post updates on milestones, when clubs meet their goals, welcoming new clubs, etc.

Another way to increase participation is to hold a walking contest. Below are some guidelines for setting up some ground rules for a walking contest.

It's best to look at these issues ahead of time, so that you will be able to answer any questions if they arise.

- Determine if you are going to have different divisions:
 - Males, females or mixed gender groups
 - Different age groups
- Decide if there will be a minimum or maximum team size.
- Set the length of the contest, at a given number of weeks or months.
- If you are competing against other churches, be sure to lay out the ground rules for the competition.
- Decide on prizes, both at the individual and team level, and if you are competing against other churches, at the church level.