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**Intent for Use:** The Go Walk Houston Walking Meeting guide is intended to be a flexible guide designed to support employees across Houston by increasing awareness of opportunities for physical activity at worksites.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Go Walk Houston 3

Walking Meeting Guide Overview 4

What is a Walking Meeting? 4

Benefits to Having Walking Meetings 4

Physical Activity Guidelines 5

Get Active 5

Getting Started 6

Getting HOU Moving: 10 Tips 9

Resources 10
Walking is one of the most common forms of physical activity across the country and is an excellent way for people to get active. In 2015, the Office of the Surgeon General of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released - Step It Up! The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities- to increase walking among people across the United States. [CDC, 2017] The Call to Action provides a road map for partners across all sectors to improve walking and walkability for all Americans.

The City of Houston Health Department (HHD), in partnership with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, adapted the Surgeon General’s Step It Up Call to Action recommendations to the city of Houston to develop the Go Healthy Houston Walking Initiative – Go Walk Houston (GWH). Go Walk Houston is a Houston-specific messaging campaign to promote walking across the entire city with specific focus on supporting and highlighting worksites in Houston, Texas.

The Go Walk Houston Campaign is a declaration of active living for all Houstonians and a movement to walk more each and every day: at home, at school and at work. Every sector has a role to play. Together, everyone can help make Houston communities more active.

Get involved and inspire others by showcasing how you walk and stay active! Just snap a picture or short video and show us how you (HOU) like to move and get healthy using the hashtag #GOWALKHOUSTON.
The Go Walk Houston Walking Meeting Guide was designed to support employees across Houston by increasing awareness of opportunities for physical activity.

From meetings to routine everyday tasks, there are many opportunities that exist to be more active while at work. This guide was developed to help employees across Houston discover new ways to walk and move more each and every day.

**WHAT IS A WALKING MEETING?**

A walking meeting is a meeting that takes place during a walk instead of in an office or conference room. Walking meetings allow for participants to walk, stand, and move more while still accomplishing the intended meeting objectives.

- **Benefits to Having Walking Meetings**

  Walking meetings encourage a supportive work environment that provides employees more opportunities throughout their workday to get active and walk.

  Walking meetings also help to:

  - **Improve health** - When done regularly, walking meetings can account for 1/3 of your daily recommended physical activity of 30 min/day.
  - **Improve energy levels and boost creativity** - Walking meetings can boost energy, break up the day, and help employees feel more connected and creative at work.
  - **Improve lines of communication** - Walking meetings can help to remove perceived and actual social barriers between staff across ranks.
  - **Improve operations** - Walking meetings can increase the availability of meeting space and remove set-backs that can occur when booking rooms.
  - **Improve mood** - Walking meetings can help employees feel happier and more relaxed by increasing opportunities to get some sunshine and fresh air.
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

To maintain good health, it is recommended for adults to participate in at least two and half hours of aerobic physical activity per week (150 minutes); or 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week\(^1\).

GET ACTIVE

In the work environment, it can be a challenge to meet the recommended levels of physical activity per day. Lack of time is a common barrier preventing many working Houstonians from reaching weekly physical activity recommendations.

Sedentary behavior involves frequent, long hours of sitting or being inactive physically. The average worker is estimated to sit about nine and a half hours a day. This is a major concern as sedentary lifestyles are a risk factor for all causes of mortality and for depression, anxiety, and chronic disease conditions, including coronary heart disease, hypertension, colon cancer, and diabetes mellitus\(^2\).

When appropriate, walking meetings allow more time for physical activity than periodic physical activity breaks alone. The goal of walking meetings is to create momentum for a culture change at work where walking is encouraged, promoted and supported.

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GETTING STARTED

1. How to Start and Plan a Walking Meeting

Start small. Begin incorporating walking meetings for informal meetings and basic check-ins. Some examples include brainstorming and planning meetings.

Ask the meeting participants if they would be open to having a walking meeting beforehand. Note that it will be a walking meeting on the agenda and send it out ahead of time.

Some types of meetings are not ideal for walking meetings. These include: (1) detailed meetings using graphs, budgets and spreadsheets, (2) meetings that require heavy note taking such as presentations and trainings, (3) meetings with groups of 6 or more and (4) meetings that discuss sensitive, private, and/or confidential information.

2. Meeting Size

Ideal size for a walking meeting is 2 to 4 people.

Meetings with groups of less than 6 people are great opportunities for incorporating walking meetings. 2 to 4 people are the ideal group size for walking meetings. Tip: Start with small groups before taking on larger ones. Consider the walkability of the route when planning for your group.

3. Location

Try to accommodate the comfort of those attending your meeting.

Walking meetings can occur indoors or outdoors. When choosing a destination, loop or route to walk, think about the weather, distance, size of the group, and time needed to reach the destination. Also consider variables such as noise, pedestrian and/or automobile traffic, safety, and mobility.
4. **Assign Roles** | Give out roles before your walking meeting.

Ask if your meeting participants are available to perform the following roles.

- **Leader** – A individual to lead the meeting and ensure the group is following the agenda.
- **Note Taker** – A person to write down any notes and create minutes for the meeting.
- **Guide** – An individual who determines the route and informs the group of stops, turns, traffic, walking hazards, shade, and alternates the route in the case of unexpected changes.

5. **Mobility** | Plan for mobility challenges.

Map the route of the walking meeting ahead of time; check the weather for rain; have an indoor backup plan.

Consider the needs and preferences of those attending your meeting. Ask the individuals who will be attending the meeting if they have any mobility and comfort concerns ahead of time and schedule an alternative as needed.

Confirm that the meeting route and length is accessible for everyone. When planning, learn the structural environment. Check for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, wheelchair accessibility, ramps, curb cuts, sidewalks and the rollability of the route.

Encourage staff and coworkers to keep walking gear at their desk, work station or car. Walking gear can include a pair of walking shoes, hat, sunshades, towels, spare clothes, and a water bottle for added comfort during walking meetings.
6. **Safety** | Consider safety in all stages of planning and during the walking meeting.

Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water. Keep a 20 ounce reusable water bottle at work and fill it with water.

Avoid walking outside for long lengths of time in the early afternoon. This is when the weather can be at its hottest.

Eat a nutritious breakfast and keep healthy snacks available to avoid fatigue or moments of low energy during the day.

Apply sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher at least 15 minutes before going outside and bug repellant as needed.

Stay aware of your surroundings, any traffic and tripping hazards.

7. **Evaluate** | Gather feedback for improvement

After a few walking meetings, ask attendees for feedback and ideas on what can be improved for the next walking meeting.
GETTING HOUSTON MOVING: 10 TIPS

1. Track your steps and set a daily or weekly goal!
2. Take a 30-minute continuous walk or three 10-minute walks. Both are equally beneficial!
3. Choose to take the stairs. Every step counts!
4. Start a walking club or join one! To burn more calories as you walk, bend and swing your arms while slightly increasing your pace.
5. Visit your local community garden to stroll, help harvest, plant or pull weeds. Your local Farmers market can be another great place to walk around.
6. Bring your headphones and listen to music when you walk, stretch, or dance.
7. Decide to walk to lunch. Ask a coworker to join.
8. Use weights and/or resistance bands to further challenge yourself when walking
9. Park further in the parking lot to increase your walking distance.
10. Participate in group fitness classes and other benefits of your worksite wellness program.

Physical Activity Breaks:

In addition to having walking meetings, regular physical activity breaks can also be beneficial in adding more movement to your work day.

Activities, such as walking, standing, marching in place, squats, shoulder rolls, ankle rolls, stretching, and more can occur at your work station or during a break. Aim to do an activity every hour of the day to avoid long periods of sitting or inactivity. Setting reminders on your phone or calendar can be helpful.

When having meetings, encourage attendees to stand as needed to stretch or “pace” the room.
RESOURCES

Local resources:

- H.P.A.R.D. Recreation Catalog and activities guide
  - Latest/other: https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/latestnews-closedrepair.html#Latest

- H.P.A.R.D. Parks and Greenspaces
  - Website https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/index.html
  - PDF of Houston area parks: https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/pdfs/HPARDInventory.pdf

- H.P.A.R.D. Multi-use Trails
  - List of Houston area trails: https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/trails.html

Houston Walking clubs

- H.P.A.R.D. community center walking programs and clubs
  - https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/senioractivities.html
  - www.houstonparks.org

- YMCA Houston walking clubs and programs
  - https://www.ymcahouston.org/
  - https://www.ymcahouston.org/programs

- Find or start a walking club using the Meetup.com website
  - https://www.meetup.com/topics/walkers/

Additional resources on walking:

- How To Be More Active At Work: http://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/how-to-be-more-active-at-work
- Go4Life from National Institute on Aging at NIH: https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/
- Everybody Walk App: http://everybodywalk.org/app/
- Choose the right sneakers! https://healthyforgood.heart.org/move-more/infographics/get-the-right-sneakers-for-your-workout-infographic
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https://houstontx.gov/parks/contact.html