



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Providing an effective approach for increasing physical activity

Social and behavioural approaches can have a positive effect on the physical activity behaviours of individuals. These approaches may range from the provision of behavioural counselling or skill development, to the provision of social support through family, friends, or peers through a variety of settings, including home, work, school, or community. Physical environment factors also affect physical activity behaviours. These factors include neighbourhood characteristics, such as safety, lighting, or proximity of places for physical activity within the neighbourhood.¹

In a recent systematic review of interventions for increasing physical activity, the Task Force on Community Preventive Services in the United States concluded that six interventions be highly recommended or recommended.^{2,3} These include:

- Community wide campaigns;
- Point-of decision prompts to encourage stair use;
- School-based physical education;
- Social support interventions in community settings;
- Individually adapted health behaviour change; and,
- Creation of, or enhanced access to, places for physical activity, combined with informational outreach activities.⁴

Strategies to increase physical activity at individual, clinical and community-based levels are key to combating risks relating to physical inactivity and sedentarism. A comprehensive strategy to promote physical activity participation among Canadians would target action at the population level through legislation and healthy public policy, and at the community level in face-to-face situations like counselling at physicians' offices or in clinical settings. Recognizing interventions which include determinants from the social and physical environment and individual aspects, as well as the interactions between these, are important.

In a recent article, McKinley and Marceau⁵ summarize the need to examine the social determinants of disease. They state that three levels of public health interventions can be addressed when examining disease such as diabetes:

- (a) "Downstream" which represents more "curative" interventions or those which reflect changes to individual lifestyle;
- (b) "Midstream" which are more preventative in nature. These would include interventions in the environment, community, workplace, or through a health setting; and,
- (c) "Upstream" represents policy-related interventions such as those that are typically government directed.⁶

McKinley et al. state that currently in public health, the emphasis of resources is on downstream interventions, however, a balance of these three levels are required. The concentration of a large amount of resources on downstream interventions leaves little for the other two levels of intervention. If resources were shifted to midstream and upstream

interventions, there will be greater benefit to the majority rather than the minority of the population, and as a result, more cost-effective to the public health care system—even if the change in behaviour of the majority is small.⁷

Individual behaviour change strategies are needed to help people decide to be active, but are insufficient and require the support of environmental and policy interventions that address risk factors, barriers, and inequities in society. Supportive social and physical environments are essential to support an individual's choice to be active at work, school, home, play or commuting from place to place. This section of the report will focus on midstream and upstream approaches, by examining various settings and suggesting individual, social and behavioural, as well as physical, environmental, and policy-related recommendations for increasing physical activity.

Healthy Public Policy (“Upstream approaches”)

The federal, provincial and territorial governments are currently developing an Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy. This Healthy Living Strategy is a framework examining several health issues, including physical activity and healthy eating, and healthy weights. Essentially, the goal of this strategy is to improve the health of Canadians by encouraging positive health decisions, through supports in the social, economic and physical environment.⁸

In McKinley and Marceau's hierarchy, an “upstream” approach focuses on public policy related to health. This can include policies set by governmental bodies. In such approach, governments could:

- ✓ Invest sufficient dollars to develop a comprehensive, well-resourced Physical Activity Strategy as part of a larger Healthy Living Strategy.⁹
- ✓ Develop and implement policy and legislation that will increase appropriate financial investment, to support integrated national, provincial and municipal actions supportive of physical activity as a “Canadian cultural norm”.
- ✓ Target strategies for specific sub populations to ensure that all Canadians pursue physical activity.
- ✓ Understand and then eliminate barriers to physical activity from the physical and social environments
- ✓ Build a comprehensive research and surveillance system to understand effective strategies and current trends and to incorporate these into policy, plans and practice to increase physical activity.
- ✓ Develop message content that is appropriate to specific social and cultural contexts including urban or rural settings.
- ✓ Implement tax incentives for physical activity participation.

- ✓ Establish a long-term partnership with municipal governments that will support the development or enhancement of physical activity opportunities.
- ✓ Invest significant funds for public education campaigns for increasing physical activity, similar to the \$500 million invested for public education of tobacco cessation.

Preventative approaches (“Midstream”)

In McKinley and Marceau’s hierarchy, a “midstream” approach focuses on prevention. This can include individual behaviour change interventions targeted through the key settings that will have most impact in the lives of Canadians.

For the individual

Interventions focusing on individual-based behaviour change provide instruction and skills development to enable people to incorporate desired behaviours into their life. It is based on (a) setting goals and monitoring progress towards these goals; (b) developing social support for these goals; (c) reinforcement of the behaviour through positive incentives; (d) problem-solving for maintaining the behaviour; and (e) preventing relapse.¹ To foster increases in individual physical activity:

- ✓ Tailor programs to a person’s readiness for change or interests.¹⁰
- ✓ Provide messages targeted to individual risk factors, as well as stage of change. One study found that motivationally tailored interventions were more effective than standard self-help interventions in promoting physical activity.¹¹ Furthermore, stage-related intervention material should contain information that is based on theory, and is easy to read and attractive.¹²
- ✓ Promote physical activity as a means of coping with job stress. The 2001 Physical Activity Monitor reveals that nine out of ten individuals believe that regular physical activity improves one’s ability to cope and reduces stress (13% moderately and 75% strongly agree).
- ✓ Work to reduce or eliminate barriers to physical activity, especially those found in the workplace. Employers need to become aware of the perceived barriers of their workers and institute practices that may help to alleviate these concerns. For example, the lack of time, lack of willpower to change, and lack of social support were often perceived as barriers for women. Employers can tailor messaging or programs to overcome such barriers, including flexible hours to overcome lack of time, introducing a buddy system to overcome the perceived lack of support. Furthermore, women in different stages of change experience different barriers to physical activity, indicating a need to consider these differences in developing strategies.¹³
- ✓ Encourage co-workers to establish a buddy system to support each other when participating in physical activities.¹⁴

- ✓ Promote physical activities that are currently prevalent¹⁵ to build on existing skills and self-efficacy. Tailor promotions to reflect activities that are currently popular or becoming popular with different age segments.
- ✓ For older adults who are beginning a physical activity regime, suggest a slow start, such as easy stretching, followed by a progressive build-up. While this is safe for most older adults, encourage them to consult their physician or a health care professional prior to beginning an exercise routine if they have health concerns.
- ✓ Emphasize the common health benefits of physical activity, reinforcing current awareness of its role in longer life expectancy and reduced chronic diseases.
- ✓ Build awareness of the additional psychological benefits of physical activity, such as better self-esteem, feeling healthy, energized, revitalized, and less stressed. Moreover, promote the social benefits of physical activity, such as the opportunity to participate in physical activity with other individuals and to enjoy the social interaction of physical activity groups, such as a rambler's or hiking club or a mall-walking group. This social aspect is particularly important for older adults and women.
- ✓ Understand which activities and what characteristics of these activities are perceived as being fun for different target groups within the population. Promote those aspects that are universal in broad-based campaigns, and promote more population-specific aspects through targeted and customized communications.
- ✓ Promote those immediate aspects of physical activity that make it a pleasant experience—enjoyable scenery, increased feelings of energy, reduced feelings of stress, and so on.
- ✓ Stress the importance of incorporating physical activity into everyday routines, particularly to adults aged 25–44, to reduce perceptions of physical activity as inconvenient. The higher ratings of inconvenience among the 25–44 age group may be due in part to heavier burdens of family, work, and social commitments, given that lack of time, energy, child care, and facilities ranked among the top barriers to physical activity for this age group.¹⁶
- ✓ Emphasize that activities need not be very hard to be beneficial. Reduce or eliminate the “no pain, no gain” ideology.
- ✓ Combat lack of time and motivation by promoting the attainable benefits of everyday activities and encouraging the setting of small, realistic goals.

In the education system

Schools can play a very important role in promoting physical activity through physical education, physical activity programming and curriculum. Schools could influence physical activity choices and options available to children and youth, through their

policies, communications and facilities. A school environment that is nurturing and supportive of physical activity would support an active lifestyle among children and youth. Schools could:

- ✓ Ensure that physical education programs are taught by physical education specialists or other teachers qualified through appropriate training in physical education.
- ✓ Provide adequate training for staff and volunteers who teach physical activity to students. Ensure the availability of appropriate resources, including guidelines for physical activity, current research, or curriculum support resources.
- ✓ Encourage school personnel to be physically active during recess, lunch hours, before and after school. These individuals are in a position to act as role models for appropriate physical activity behaviour.¹⁷
- ✓ Promote physical activity programs and physical education classes that not only involve participation in physical activities, but teach lifelong skill-building and confidence-building behaviours to children and youth,¹⁸ including decision-making skills, teamwork, discipline, leadership, self-esteem, equity, lifelong physical activity, participation, and fair play.
- ✓ Provide a variety of activities including both structured and non-structured types of activities as well as competitive and non-competitive activities. This will encourage participation by children of all skill, development, and confidence levels, and will promote lifelong physical activity. This is particularly important for preadolescent and adolescent girls.¹⁹ Provide a host of seasonal activities or accommodate seasonal patterns by providing appropriate facilities during the months when children's activities are typically in decline.²⁰
- ✓ Provide more opportunities at recess to increase children's physical activity levels. Research shows that children spend much of their recess time being inactive.²¹ This research also suggests that modifications to school policies-such as increasing the frequency of recesses, providing suitable facilities, and educating staff to prompt physical activity-may contribute to higher physical activity levels.
- ✓ Promote participation in activities offered through physical activity programs and physical education classes that encourage lifelong physical activity behaviour.
- ✓ Determine and incorporate targeted strategies to increase physical activity behaviours, based on readiness to change, tailored specifically to children.²² Provide specific messages when dealing with children and youth. For example, when customizing messages for youth, focus on physical activity as "cool"; for children, focus on physical activity as "fun".
- ✓ Provide homework or newsletters that encourage and support physical activity and interaction among parents and children.

- ✓ Provide incentives for physical activity, including certificates or rewards for students who participate in physical activities, awards that recognize students' efforts in physical activities, social events that publicly recognize students who participate in physical activities, and a rotating award for classes involved in physical activities.
- ✓ Encourage and provide examples of physical activity relevant to different sexes, cultures and abilities or disabilities.¹⁴
- ✓ Ensure that students participating in physical activity programs are free from discrimination, harassment, and intimidation.²³
- ✓ Ensure that curricula for physical education sustain a high level of “active time” during physical education class.
- ✓ Provide accessible and free transportation to and from extracurricular physical activities outside the school environment. This ensures participation for all students, regardless of their household income.
- ✓ Encourage active commuting of students to and from schools. Schools can draw from existing programs such as Go for Green's national Active & Safe Routes to School program, which encourages the use of active modes of transportation to get to and from school.²⁴ These initiatives include the Walking School Bus program for young children, with adult supervision and a focus on safety and traffic awareness, the Biking School Bus program for older children, with adult supervision and a focus on bike safety, and International Walk to School Day.²⁵
- ✓ Schools could consider asking municipal recreation departments to assist them with after-school programs.
- ✓ Ensure that school facilities are available to students for physical activity at various times, including before school, recess, or after school. Moreover, access to a variety of facilities is important, as a lack of facilities are considered a barrier to the participation of adolescents in physical activity. The physical activity of children is positively related to the access to convenient spaces, facilities and equipment.²⁶
- ✓ Expose students and staff to a comprehensive curriculum of physical activity outside of physical education programming, including, physical activity opportunities and programs at recess, at lunch, and after school, or intramural and inter-school sporting programs. Such exposure should ensure opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activities.
- ✓ Establish policies in the school system, which ensure availability of appropriate facilities, equipment, supplies, and supervision for physical activity to support the physical activity needs of all students.¹⁹

- ✓ Ensure that the spaces and facilities for physical education and physical activity are safe, clean and well lit. Also, ensure that the facilities and equipment, including playgrounds and gymnasiums, meet current safety regulations.
- ✓ Ensure a healthy school environment by encouraging good nutrition and healthy eating among students.²⁷ Ensure a good supply of nutritious snacks through the cafeteria and vending services. As an alternative, provide less expensive healthy food options and more expensive unhealthy options.²⁶ Strategically post information on healthy eating, such as Canada Food Guide posters.²⁸

For children and youth via the home setting

The support of family is an important factor for children's physical activity. This could be influenced by modelling health promoting behaviours, providing a supportive environment at home, and encouragement. In the home environment,

- ✓ Promote parental involvement in school physical activity functions. Invite parents to volunteer at recess or lunch hour, to help coach an after school activity, or to attend their child's extracurricular physical activities.
- ✓ Encourage parents to reduce or regulate children's inactive behaviours, including television viewing or video games. Television viewing habits of children need to be reviewed on a regular basis by parents, as high levels of television viewing has been associated with obesity.^{29, 30}
- ✓ Promote parental encouragement of children's activity. Research shows that parental encouragement is correlated with higher levels of physical activity in children.
- ✓ Encourage parents to model appropriate physically active behaviour, help children establish physical activity goals, reinforce physical activity with rewards when goals are achieved, and organize family activities that include physical activity.
- ✓ Be aware of how much physical activity children actually do while at school. One study found that children whose physical activity is reduced during the school day did not compensate for this missing activity after school.³¹ Therefore, parents can find out about daily physical opportunities available to their children at school, and if such activities have been restricted during the day, parents can encourage children to be active in various after-school activities.
- ✓ Encourage children and youth to spend time outdoors. Research shows that the time spent outdoors is positively correlated with children's physical activity levels.³²

In the workplace

Similar to the school environment, the infrastructure of the workplace can prove to be a positive environment for physical activity. There is access to a large adult population, an existing communication system, support networks, and typically convenient facilities or opportunities. Employers could:

- ✓ Promote national physical activity guidelines such as Canada's Guide for Physical Activity. Consider displaying a poster in the cafeteria or other high traffic areas, providing access to copies of the booklet in a reference area or available from the administration or health and safety offices.
- ✓ Encourage workers to participate in physical activity outside of work or working hours, for example in community recreational activities.
- ✓ Adopt policies to reinforce alternative or indirect supports in the workplace that encourage physical activity and healthy behaviours. These include job sharing, telecommuting, smoking bans, and healthy food choices in vending machines or in the cafeteria.
- ✓ Adopt policies that would allow employees to work flexible hours in order to participate in physical activity opportunities. Flexible work hours may help to overcome the highly ranked barrier to physical activity-lack of time.
- ✓ Provide incentives or rewards for employees who participate in physical activities. These can include certificates or rewards, monetary rewards, time off from work, or draws for gift certificates which focus on physical activity.³³
- ✓ Local municipalities, provincial or local health departments could recognize and reward employers who promote a healthy workplace.
- ✓ Provide a favourable physical activity atmosphere in the workplace by sponsoring community-related physical activities, making a financial contribution toward equipment, jerseys, and tournaments for local sports teams, or sponsoring physical activity sessions in the community such a free public skating or swimming.
- ✓ Encourage the support of family members by promoting physical activities that involve the whole family. This can be done by allowing all family members to use on-site fitness facilities, or by hosting a physical activity day for employees and their families. This may help to alleviate the potential barrier of juggling the demands of family and work.
- ✓ Provide outreach to individuals who do not currently participate in company physical activity programs.³⁴
- ✓ Determine why employees do not engage in workplace physical activity programs.
- ✓ Encourage managers or senior staff to be physically active. These individuals are in an position to act as role models for appropriate physical activity behaviour.
- ✓ Provide social rewards or reinforcement for employees who participate in physical activities. For example, host a social event that publicly recognizes employees who

participate in physical activities, create an “active employee of the month award”, ensure that managers and senior staff verbally encourage and praise employees who participate in physical activity, and use the public address system in the workplace to recognize participants in physical activities or successful teams.

- ✓ Adopt general health promotion policies in the workplace, as well as written policies specifically supporting physical activity among employees. Establish clear physical activity objectives for the company, or use “scorecards” to monitor health behaviours.³⁵
- ✓ Support workers by offering comprehensive physical activity programming. This could include physical activity opportunities and programs in the early morning, during breaks, at lunch, after work, or during the weekends.
- ✓ Encourage shared leadership when organizing physical activity programming. Involve members from all levels of the company to participate in a committee that examines the role of physical activity in the workplace. Responsibilities could include the development, promotion, and execution of physical activity programming and communication with management. Obtain input from workers in the development, organization, and administration of wellness programs and activities that would further encourage their interest and participation in physical activity. Involving employees in the planning process increases their participation levels.³⁶ Allow employees who volunteer to participate in the organization of physical activity programming or who participate on physical activity committees to do so during work hours.³⁷
- ✓ Network with, or learn from other companies who have implemented a physical activity program.
- ✓ Establish policies to ensure that appropriate facilities, equipment, and supplies for physical activity are available to support the physical activity needs of workers. They can be either on-site at the workplace or off-site in the broader community. Ensure that there are opportunities for physical activity year-round.
- ✓ Encourage employees to actively commute to and from work.
- ✓ Ensure that facilities such as sidewalks, lanes, trails, and lighting are maintained according to safety standards. One study suggests that a trail with favourable environmental factors, such as a pleasant environment, convenience, and safety provides employees in a nearby industrial park with a good opportunity to walk or exercise during the workday. It also found that this trail was used most frequently during the weekdays, early in the morning, and during the late afternoon.³⁸
- ✓ Make changes in the environment that do not require individuals to make “active” decisions.³⁹ These types of passive interventions can include making stairs accessible and convenient. Communities can designate some streets for walking or bicycling

only, or encourage mixed land use (business, residential, shopping, etc.) in new community developments, all of which foster active commuting to local facilities.³⁹

- ✓ Ensure that on-site physical activity facilities are suitable for the employee population. It is important to note, however, that the fitness facilities at work have not been shown to actually increase physical activity. Moreover, it is suggested that these types of facilities are more suitable for larger workplaces (>1,000 employees).⁴⁰
- ✓ Ensure that facilities for physical activity are convenient, affordable, and safe.⁴¹ Ensure secure areas at the workplace for employees to store bicycles.
- ✓ Provide on-site facilities such as showers, lockers, and change rooms to encourage physical activity and active transportation. Ensure that these facilities are clean and adequate for the number of employees.
- ✓ Provide a variety of easy low-cost physical activities, which are easily integrated into daily life.¹⁴ For example, walking is the most popular leisure-time activity for all ages, yet is low-cost and simple. Companies can consider programs such as early morning, lunch hour, or after work walking clubs. Walking “trails” can be designed throughout the building, or on local walking pathways.
- ✓ Consider renting local physical activity facilities, such as a bowling alley, swimming pool, or arena to reward employees with a physical activity or recreational day.¹⁴
- ✓ Establish agreements with local off-site physical activity facilities for group discounts for employees. Smaller workplaces can consider linking together to jointly negotiate such discounts. Subsidize fitness health club memberships for employees.
- ✓ Consider using off-site facilities in the community that are not specifically designed for physical activity. These can include community centres, schools, or halls within places of worship.

In the community

Social support within the community plays a very important role in supporting and maintaining the physical activity of adults and children alike. These can include partnerships or linkages with the facilities and programs available in the community, local physical activity and sports organizations, workplace supports. In addition, communities could,

- ✓ Choose interventions that are well suited to community needs and abilities. Set priorities based on community goals and objectives.⁴²
- ✓ Develop cooperative agreements between school boards and municipalities to share use of facilities and human resources (e.g., community access to school facilities or school access to community facilities). Community health departments could work in

conjunction with educators to ensure that physical activity facilities are used effectively and that barriers to physical activity for children and youth are reduced.⁴³

- ✓ Link Canadians to appropriate resources. Communities can provide leisure guides and calendars that describe the physical activity opportunities available locally. Communities can provide Web pages or telephone numbers providing information regarding current physical activity programs and registration details, so that individuals may register in programs by phone, fax, or through the Internet.
- ✓ Overcome lack of skills by offering first-timers' classes to encourage trying new activities and promoting activities that people are already doing. Encourage a first-timers' class specifically for older adults, to allow them to explore a wide variety of activities in a safe environment.
- ✓ Improve the accessibility and convenience of programs through family-oriented scheduling and through reduced fees for low-income families and individuals.
- ✓ Create a buddy system to link up people who can encourage each other, especially for skill development.
- ✓ Consider alternative user fee options for low-income families when developing policies. These options can include reducing or waiving registration fees for children from low-income families, accepting services such as volunteering in lieu of fees, allowing deferred or multiple smaller payments, and so on. Encourage low-income families in the community to "swap" or exchange physical activity equipment once children outgrow the equipment.
- ✓ Support family-oriented programming and facilities, including providing safe and affordable child-care programs in facilities where parents can do their own physical activities or arrange for simultaneous programming for parents and children.
- ✓ Promote and support the use of facilities not specifically designed for children's physical activity, especially in rural or small communities that do not have access to many physical activity facilities. Communities can make use of schools outside of traditional school hours for other types of activities, including walking clubs, dance classes, aerobics, team sports, etc.
- ✓ Promote community wide campaigns through television, radio, newspaper, or movie trailers. Error! Bookmark not defined.
- ✓ Post motivational signage encouraging stair use nearby elevators and escalators.⁴⁴
- ✓ Provide safe and well-maintained routes for physical activity, such as adequate lighting on paths, safety audits on streets or trails, bike patrols on bicycle paths, and well-maintained sidewalks or paths.

- ✓ Examine transportation policies and ensure a balance between trails and paths for active commuting and public transportation routes. Consider whether the current infrastructure allows an individual to get off a couple of stops earlier and walk the rest of the way home, whether it supports commuting by bicycle, and whether there are problem areas in the transit and traffic patterns on a network of roads that prevent walking or bicycling.
- ✓ Encourage and support commuting by bicycle by providing lanes separated from vehicle traffic, designated bicycle lanes, preferential signage, and signage reminding motorists to share the road. Facilitate longer bicycle commutes through the public transportation system by providing bike racks on buses for those who use both means of transportation to commute. Provide secure bicycle parking in business areas and throughout the community.
- ✓ Create supportive environments for physical activity in conjunction with urban planners. Provide linkages with residential, business, and retail areas with a system of well-networked paths and trails.
- ✓ Promote the attractiveness and user-friendliness of neighbourhoods to encourage active commuting and recreational walking and bicycling.
- ✓ Provide access to school facilities for groups participating in physical activity outside of school hours. Consider offering physical activity programming on the weekends, before and after school, in the evenings, or during the summer months.
- ✓ Ensure that the hours and location of community programming and facilities for physical activity meet the needs of students for participating in physical activity outside of school hours.
- ✓ Develop changes in the community environment, include making stairs accessible and convenient, and restricting some streets to walking or bicycling only. Encouraging mixed land use (business, residential, shopping, etc.) in new community developments, as this encourages active commuting to local facilities.³⁹
- ✓ Encourage the use of facilities *not specifically designed* for children's physical activity, especially in rural or small communities that do not have access to many physical activity facilities. For example, using meeting rooms in places of worship offer an opportunity to support and encourage physical activity.
- ✓ Foster community-wide coalitions (including parks and recreation, public health departments, schools, YW-YMCA, community centres, hospitals, etc.) to integrate physical activity opportunities into a variety of systems.
- ✓ Help professionals in various sectors to incorporate strategies to increase physical activity within their own strategies and plans. Compile a compendium of best practices for promoting and supporting physical activity in different settings such as

workplaces, schools, communities, and the health care system, which can be used as practical models by professionals to increase physical activity within their sector.

- ✓ Retirement homes could offer programs for walking or wheeling and recognize those who attend regularly or who reach specified distance targets.
- ✓ Encourage the use of technology when implementing physical activity interventions. For national and provincial governments and organizations, who promote population-based interventions, it is important to communicate cost effectively to large numbers of individuals.⁴⁵ For example, an effective strategy for communicating with the population, especially those who are insufficiently active, may be to use a “proactive” approach directly contacting individuals and offering a particular service, through the Internet.⁴⁵
- ✓ Municipalities could link up with each other -electronic interactions may be the most economical-in order to share innovative ideas, lessons, samples, and “success” stories for how they have been able to incorporate physical activities into their programs and services.
- ✓ Municipalities can create a database of best practices for sport and recreation, clearly identifying why the program is a best practice, any issues involved in implementing the program, and the program’s impact, so that other municipalities can determine its applicability and relevance to their own situation.

Health care settings

The critical role that physical activity plays in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity, certain cancers, osteoporosis and other debilitating conditions is well documented. Physicians are typically a primary source of health care and information for Canadians. Indeed, health care providers are well positioned to play a credible, essential and important role in helping Canadians become more active and achieve better health. Health care providers could:

- ✓ Provide education and interventions directed towards promotion of physical activity through the health care system. Health care professionals could explain the risk factors of chronic conditions in later life associated with sedentary behaviour in youth, help families guide and tailor physical activity programs for children and youth, and describe the role of physical activity in weight management, skill development and building self-esteem.
- ✓ Help identify barriers to physical activity, and provide concrete steps on how to overcome such barriers.
- ✓ Provide advice to patients on how to effectively and safely increase physical activity levels.

- ✓ Encourage employees to discuss physical activity with their physicians and other health care professionals. Involve physicians or other health care professionals when “making the case” for physical activity in the workplace. For example, they can be used as a credible reference when describing the potential cost benefit of a company workplace health promotion program, or to counsel employees on the benefits of physical activity.⁴⁶ Indeed, a recent Canadian survey reveals that the primary source of wellness related educational information for employees is physicians.⁴⁷
- ✓ Provide references to other professionals, such as nutritionists, exercise physiologists, trainers, and physiotherapists, when necessary and appropriate.

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