

# A workplace on the move

Wellington City Council encouraged staff to take a Pedometer Challenge for four weeks in November 2004 as a workplace pilot scheme aimed at encouraging people into doing more physical activity as part of their daily routine.

Wellington City Council, Diabetes New Zealand and Sport & Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) promoted the scheme with the aim of motivating as many council staff as possible to be involved.

Participating staff were given a pedometer and information on pre-diabetes and nutrition including Diabetes New Zealand pamphlets. The focus for staff was on improving against a personally set goal rather than competing against others. The only obligation for staff was to return a score-sheet of their number of steps each week and to complete an evaluation at the end of the challenge.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE CHALLENGE

- To raise awareness of pre-diabetes.
- To communicate the key message of pre-diabetes prevention.
- To create a co-ordinated approach to a workplace health programme.
- To engender a health conscious attitude amongst staff.
- To communicate the benefits of physical activity.

Staff were encouraged to increase the number of steps they took each day, to have a pre-diabetes test, and to alter their physical activity and eating habits permanently.

## KEY MESSAGES OF THE CHALLENGE

- Nutrition messages: based on the Food and Nutrition Guidelines for New Zealanders with emphasis on fruit and vegetables.
- Pre-diabetes messages: tests are available; pre-diabetes can be treated successfully; if not dealt with it may lead to diabetes.
- Physical activity messages: fit extra exercise into the daily routine; make some long term changes to routines; physical activity along with good nutrition can improve health significantly.

## RESULTS OF THE CHALLENGE

- 567 staff asked for pedometers.
- The main reason people became involved was to see how physically active they were.
- Accurate pedometers are an important motivating factor.
- 50% said they would continue to use their pedometers after the pilot scheme ended.



Sarah Thomson (Diabetes New Zealand), striding out with Kerry Prendergast (Mayor of Wellington) and Nick Hill (CEO of SPARC) at the Pedometer Challenge launch.

- One third of staff returned every weekly return. For the first week 60% of participants returned forms, with 55%, 45% and 32% for subsequent weeks.
- Returns showed that people were increasing the number of steps they took daily.
- Half of respondents to an email survey said they understood pre-diabetes.
- Following pre-diabetes tests, two people were referred for more investigation.

Comments from staff included 'I enjoyed increasing the distance', 'it gave me a greater awareness of doing more exercise' and 'it made me think of and make better choices'.

People are at different stages along the road towards adequate physical activity. The task is to encourage them with messages as well as activities they enjoy so that physical activity becomes part of their daily routine. The pedometer challenge was on people's own terms rather than being part of a competition and has brought most of the staff who participated a bit further along their own roads.

Future roles of the council may be to organise a range of daily or weekly activities so that people can find their own level of involvement and progress to the next step with people they have easy access to for support and involvement, that is, their workmates. Push Play – your own way... [d](#)

Source: *Pedometer Challenge Evaluation* by Bruce Stokell, Sportwork Limited