



Janet Mountain
Executive Director

Michael & Susan Dell Foundation Michael & Susan Dell Treadmill Program

Company Overview

- Global private family foundation established in 1999
- Mission is to transform the lives of children living in urban poverty through better health and education
- Grant commitments to date exceed \$650 million
- Offices in Austin, Texas; New Delhi, India; and Cape Town, South Africa
- 60 employees worldwide

Program Components

- Created environments that promote healthy behaviors balancing good nutrition and regular physical activity.
- Included an investment in health and wellness benefits in total employee compensation package.
- Explored physical activity during work by replacing desks with treadmills and “walking desks.”
- Offered pre and post testing for body mass composition (BMI), metabolic rate, lipid and glucose profiles, and a health risk assessment (HRA).
- Encouraged treadmill use at 1.0 to 1.5 mph for at least 2 hours per day, while working.

Program Success Story

- Ongoing voluntary participation 90%.
- Overall healthier, more engaged workforce.
- Top management support and participation.
- Overall decreases in cholesterol levels (increased HDL and a drop in LDL) and triglycerides, an average 7 pound weight loss and decreased BMI.
- Participants overwhelmingly voted to keep the treadmills in individual work spaces and in team rooms and conference rooms for employee use.
- Program is a key part of our US benefits program and helps attract and retain high-caliber talent.
- Interest in implementing program in schools to improve childrens’ health and learning.

Executive Director’s Statement

“Having treadmills in our office has obviously been tremendously beneficial for our health, but the most surprising results have been around how much more productive and more focused we are—how much longer we can stay engaged—when we’re not sitting sedentary all day long.”

Focus on Physical Activity

Physical inactivity contributes to poor health and increases the risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, colon cancer, osteoporotic fractures, depression, and injuries related to falls. The annual cost difference between an active person and an inactive person can be as high as \$865 (in year 2000 dollars).³⁵ In fact, if inactive American adults were to become physically active, the annual savings could be \$76.6 billion (in year 2000 dollars).³⁵

Fortunately, even moderate increases in physical activity can help improve fitness and agility, reduce health risks, and help maintain a healthy body weight.³⁶ Every week, adults should spend 2-1/2 hours doing moderately-intense cardiovascular activity (e.g., brisk walking) or 1-1/4 hours doing vigorously-intense cardiovascular activity (e.g., jogging), or an equivalent combination. In addition, muscle-strengthening activities are recommended more than 2 days per week.³⁷

Ideas for Small/Medium-Sized Employers

- Develop a policy related to physical activity sessions during the workday, such as adding 15 minutes to lunch breaks.
- Encourage short physical activity sessions (e.g., walking, stretching) during all breaks periods and/or during shift changes.
- Encourage—better yet, lead—lunch hour walking groups.
- Promote individual and/or team pedometer challenges with incentives.
- Promote/encourage “walk and talks” instead of office meetings.
- Consider installing “walking desks.” Refer to the sidebar.
- Consider providing a shower(s) and changing room(s) to encourage employees to be physically active.
- Negotiate employee discounts or subsidize employee memberships at local fitness facilities/YMCAs.
- Place point-of-decision prompts (e.g., signage near stairs, map walking routes) to promote the benefits of physical activity.
- Provide bike racks/storage to support “ride to work” programs.
- Purchase a stationary bike and/or cross trainer and stretch station. Place in a high traffic area (e.g., empty break room).
- Promote a “stress buster” program that encourages three- to five-minute physical activity breaks at your desk.