NATIONAL WALKING DAY
HOW-TO GUIDE

For Companies
National Walking Day is April 1. By committing to walk at least 30 minutes, you can get healthier and raise awareness about the importance of physical activity. On this day, millions of people throughout the United States will come together to take steps to live a healthier life for themselves, their families and their communities.

You can celebrate the day in the workplace, at schools, in neighborhood walking groups and in local organizations or clubs. This guide includes heart-healthy tips, helpful articles and an intermediate walking plan to help you plan a great event for your company or organization.

What You Will Find in this Guide:

- Getting Started
- How to Participate
- Communication Templates
- Resources

Your free online toolkit includes many more resources and materials:

- Four Weeks of Healthy Living Tips
- Four Weeks of Healthy Living Articles
- Four-Week Intermediate Walking Plan
- Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge Tracker
- Posters and Graphics
- Warm-Weather Fitness Guide
- Cold-Weather Fitness Guide
- PowerPoint Presentation
National Walking Day is a day to get active and kick off healthy lifestyles in your company, school, organization or in your circle of friends. It’s easy to get started with this guide, plus our great promotional resources and health information. Start here with our step-by-step action plan.

**Step 1: Get your management to sign off**

If you need approval to celebrate National Walking Day, use the email template on page 5. It has great information you can share with your leadership about why healthy employees are good for the company.

**Step 2: Choose your date**

National Walking Day is April 1, but you can set a different date if it works better for your company. Your Walking Day can be any day! Once you choose a day, get it on your employees’ calendars right away, and use one of our communication templates to help build awareness. You can also start sending daily tips, stretches and a walking plan to get employees moving.

**Step 3: Choose your event**

We have lots of great ideas from other companies and individuals who have celebrated National Walking Day with us. Take a look at the event ideas in this guide, or come up with your own.

**Step 4: Plan your event**

Use the checklist in this guide to make sure you’ve covered all the details — from food to emails to healthy living tips.

**Step 5: Spread the word**

Date set? Now start promoting your event. Use the emails, social media posts and health information we’ve provided. Then hang posters in break rooms, restrooms and meeting areas to build momentum. You can download free promotional materials from the Heart.org/NationalWalkingDay website.

**Step 6: Celebrate!**

Take a breath, and start walking. Today is the day you’ll pledge to live a longer, stronger and healthier life.
How to Participate

National Walking Day is a day to kick off a commitment to healthy living. Below is a list of ideas you can use before, during and after the day.

**Before the Big Day**

Building excitement is important. There are many ways to do this including:

- Send emails. Use one of our email templates or get creative and make your own.
- Use social media to increase awareness and excitement.
- Place give-aways on employees’ desks. Visit shopheart.org for some options. Our red shoelaces are a great tie-in to this year’s theme.
- Have your CEO or other senior leader send company-wide voicemails. Use our templates as a guide.
- A week before the event, kick off a walking competition among your senior leaders. Give them all pedometers and ask them to log their steps each day. The winner and their department could receive some sort of reward — jeans day, lunch or time off.
- Setting a goal or making a pledge are often great ways for people to kick off their healthy lifestyle. Ask each employee to write down one goal or pledge to start living healthy. Incorporate this pledge into the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge. (See After the Event for more details.)

**On National Walking Day**

- Wear sneakers. Wearing comfortable shoes will make it easier for everyone to participate. Encourage them to wear red shoelaces as a symbol of their support of the event.
- Host a walk. Set a time for your senior leaders to lead employees on a 30-minute walk. This could be indoors or outdoors. Map a Walking Path at StartWalkingNow.org.
- Kick off the day with a rally. Ask your CEO or other senior leader to address employees using the information in this guide or in our presentation. Announce the start of the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge. (See After the Event for more details.)
- Host a wellness seminar. This could include:
  - An introduction to making healthy choices a personal priority through AHA’s Life’s Simple 7 and My Life Check assessment. Within a few minutes, employees will know how they’re doing with each one of Life’s Simple 7 measures. A personal heart score and life plan will help them create a personal action plan. Learn more at MyLifeCheckHeart.org.
  - How-to activity seminar with a local fitness center to educate employees on physical activity topics like the proper way to stretch.
  - Visit from a registered dietitian nutritionist to talk about healthy eating and answer any questions.
  - Cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings from a local hospital or clinic.
  - Testimonial from a heart disease survivor who shares his or her experience.
How to Participate, Continued

After the Event
Healthy living doesn’t stop after one day. Use National Walking Day as a starting point and keep the momentum going by launching a four-week program for health. We’ve included everything you need to motivate your employees — tips, articles, a walking plan and a tracker.

Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge
For the next four weeks encourage your employees to keep walking and living a healthy lifestyle. Your National Walking Day toolkit includes four weeks of tips, articles, a walking plan and a walking tracker.

- Daily Tips — Send one to your employees via voicemail or email each day.
- Articles — Send one to kick off each week via email or as a desk drop.
- Intermediate Walking Plan — Send to employees at the beginning of the countdown, or send one part each day or each week.
- Walking Countdown Challenge Tracker — Send to employees so they can track their progress.

Ways To Make It More Fun
- Make the Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge a competition and kick it off on National Walking Day.
- Let your employees form walking clubs and competition. Get tips and resources at Heart.org/WalkingClubs.
- Hold another rally or a picnic to celebrate after four weeks of health.
- Celebrate your employees’ success in walking and lifestyle changes at the Heart Walk. Have fun and raise funds to save lives from America’s number one and number four killers — heart disease and stroke. Find details for your local event at HeartWalk.org.

National Walking Day is where millions of Americans across the nation will take steps to a healthier life, but it’s also about having fun and creating camaraderie. Don’t forget to enjoy the day!
Communication Templates

Use the text below to promote your company's participation in National Walking Day. Customize it to fit your events. You can also use it for company-wide communications.

Talking Points/Email to Management for Event Approval

We would like your approval to kick off a healthier way of living for our employees by celebrating National Walking Day with the American Heart Association. The official day is Wednesday, April 1, but we can have our own celebration anytime. We'll get free resources to help our employees get on a healthier path.

Health care is one of the most significant cost pressures facing companies today. Consider these facts:

- Over 68 percent of American adults (more than 154 million) are overweight or obese — and this number continues to grow.
- Sedentary jobs have increased 83 percent since 1950.
- Lost productivity due to chronic health problems costs corporate America about $183 billion each year.
- More than one in three American adults have some form of cardiovascular disease. By 2030, this number is expected to reach almost 45 percent.

The good news is that National Walking Day can play an important role in getting our employees and our nation healthier by:

- Offering practical health information, tips and resources to help people adopt a healthier lifestyle.
- Improving morale, team-building and productivity.
- Letting our employees know we care about their health.
Communication Templates, Continued

Announcement
Step by step, day after day, you walk to make progress. Every day we take thousands of steps to get where we need to go. Now we can take steps toward a healthier workplace and support the American Heart Association.

On Wednesday, April 1, [INSERT COMPANY NAME] will join the American Heart Association in celebrating National Walking Day. It’s a day to challenge ourselves and our nation to get heart healthy and fit. We’ll have several events on this day including:

- [INSERT EVENT – e.g., rally, CEO speech, walk across campus, kick off the Heart Walk]
- [INSERT EVENT]

Mark your calendars now. More details will be coming soon!

Second Announcement

Don’t forget: On Wednesday April 1, we’ll be celebrating National Walking Day with the American Heart Association. Physical inactivity is a huge national problem. Eighty percent of adults in America don’t get enough physical activity. That’s true for many of us right here at [INSERT COMPANY NAME]. And it means we’re at greater risk for heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases. But we’re not going to take it sitting down.

On April 1, we’ll join millions of men and women across America as they pledge to live a healthier lifestyle and get physically active. Here’s what you can do to join in the celebration:

- Show your support and wear sneakers to work on April 1.
- Join our all-staff rally at [INSERT TIME] at [INSERT LOCATION] and pledge to live a healthier lifestyle.
- Since you’ll be wearing your sneakers, we challenge you to take a 30-minute walk on April 1 — and keep it up. Follow our designated Walking Path or another route to start a habit of daily walking at work.
- Visit Heart.org/Walking and use the American Heart Association’s free tips and tools to stay motivated on your walking program and to sign up to participate and raise funds for your community’s Heart Walk.

Don’t forget to mark your calendar for [INSERT TIME] on April 1 to join us in our celebration at [INSERT LOCATION].

Day Before Event

Don’t forget: Tomorrow is our National Walking Day celebration. Be sure to join us for a fun rally and a short walk. Most of all, don’t forget to wear your sneakers. Meet us at [INSERT LOCATION] tomorrow at [INSERT TIME].

Don’t be late!
Post Event

Thanks to everyone who joined us to celebrate National Walking Day. We had a great turnout and a lot of commitment to get healthy and get fit. [ADD MORE HERE IF DESIRED, e.g., announcement of winners, pledges, etc.]

But we can’t get healthy in one day. So we’re launching a Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge, courtesy of the American Heart Association. Every week for the next four weeks, we’ll be sending you everything you need to complete the challenge. You’ll get:

• Daily health tips
• Great weekly articles that will help guide you through the ups and downs of getting healthy
• A walking plan for intermediate walkers who want to improve their health and increase their energy

[INSERT FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN HEART WALK]

Don’t forget that part of fighting heart disease, the nation’s number one killer, is helping the American Heart Association fund lifesaving research. We can do that by spreading the word and raising funds for the [INSERT CITY NAME] Heart Walk on [INSERT DATE].

Thanks and let’s get walking!

[IF APPLICABLE, INCLUDE INFORMATION ABOUT ANOTHER RALLY OR EVENT AT THE END OF THE FOUR WEEKS]

Daily Email for Four-Week Walking Countdown Challenge

Below are some ideas for sending your daily email with tips, the walking plan or the article.

• Use the countdown theme by spelling out how many days are left, e.g., 30 days.
• Use the countdown in reverse by announcing which day of the countdown you’re on, e.g., Day One, Day Two.
• Ask for feedback on the tips you’re sending. For example, if you provide a tip on healthy substitutions, ask your staff to send in their tips, then share them with the company the next day.
• Ask employees to make the recipes and send pictures of their creations that you can share.
• Don’t overwhelm your staff with too many messages. Use different mediums, e.g., send daily tips through voicemail or send one email a week with the walking plan for the week and the article.
The American Heart Association has many resources to help your employees be more active and live healthier. Send them to Heart.org/HealthyLiving for the latest info on physical activity, healthy eating, healthier kids, and much more.

Visit Heart.org/WorkplaceWellness for great resources for your workplace, including our Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit and Fit-Friendly Worksites recognition program.

Find information about your local Heart Walk event at HeartWalk.org.

Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter. Sign up for our My Heart. My Life. and Heart At Work e-newsletters.

Thank you from the American Heart Association for participating in National Walking Day. If you need any assistance planning your event or if you have any questions, please contact your local American Heart Association office. And mark your calendar now to participate in National Eating Healthy Day on the first Wednesday in November!