National Walk at Lunch Day

April 27th, 2016 marks the 10th year of National Walk at Lunch Day – an event hosted by Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) to promote physical activity during the work and school day. Walking has multiple benefits for both physical and emotional health. Walking is a low-impact, easily accessible activity that is appropriate for individuals of all fitness levels. Regular walking lowers blood pressure and significantly reduces the risk of cardiovascular events, Type 2 diabetes, and other chronic disease. Taking walk breaks during the day can also help improve cognitive performance and improve quality of sleep. Walking outdoors is especially beneficial because it provides access to green space, sunlight, and fresh air which promotes mental wellbeing.¹

Promoting walking during the workday is an effective worksite wellness strategy that requires no resources other than walking shoes. Walking during the workday is associated with feelings of relaxation and reduced stress at work as well as improved mood and enthusiasm, which can have positive impacts on productivity². Walking has also been linked to improved psychological wellbeing, cognitive function, and academic performance in children¹,³.

BCBS of Vermont is encouraging employees, students, and other individuals from across the state to assemble a group to walk at lunch on April 27th as a kickoff to a regular walking routine. Groups can join a BCBS sponsored walk or establish their own event by registering on the BCBS website. Groups that register in advance of the event will receive materials for their walkers.

Employers may want to consider launching a lunchtime walking program or promoting walking meetings by providing practical strategies on how to facilitate a walking meeting. Some examples include:

- Using a dictation app on a cell phone for notetaking
- Conducting calls on a cell phone instead of in the office
- Setting aside a portion of a meeting for a walk
- Encouraging people to stand or walk in place during indoor meetings
- Ensuring safety at all time

For additional resources on the benefits of walking, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

1) Collaborating for Health, 2012
2) Thogersen-Ntoumani et al, 2015
3) National Center for Safe Routes to School http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/what-are-health-benefits-children-who-walk-or-bicycle-school