

**ConnectiFIT
Pedometer Walking
Program Highlights:**

- During the past year there were a total of four pedometer walking programs, two at the Department of Public Health and two at the Department of Administrative Services.
- The walking programs held at the DPH were the *Spring into Summer* and the *2006 National Parks Exploration*.
- Combined the DPH programs had 139 participants who took 527,93,979 steps, which is equivalent to 26,397miles.
- The Department of Administrative Services hosted the *Walk to Mickey* and the *Walk to Hawaii*.
- Combined the DAS programs had 161 participants who walked 38,899,931 steps which is comparable to 19,516 miles.

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Connecticut Department of Public Health

Worksite Wellness Program

Newsletter

January-March 2007

Commissioner's Corner

In an effort to help Governors improve healthy lifestyles and wellness among Americans, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices established a *Healthy States Initiative*. This Initiative awarded 13 innovative, well-planned proposals with Healthy States grants. Of the 34 states that submitted funding proposals, Connecticut was one of the 13 winning proposals.

In a press release Governor Rell indicated that "This grant will help us coordinate that data to document the impact and cost effectiveness of ConnectiFIT program. It will help Connecticut to build a more comprehensive approach to employee wellness."

The DPH Obesity Program will lead this collaborative effort with involvement from the

Office of the Governor, the Connecticut Public Health Foundation, Yale Rudd Center, University of Connecticut, Department of Administrative Services, Office of Policy and Management, Office of Health Care Access, and the Office of the State Comptroller. From this group, an "Interdisciplinary Health Policy Team" was created and provides oversight for the project. The Team is charged with conducting research and developing policy options for consideration by the Governor and State Legislature at the conclusion of the grant.

Given the rising cost of health care for state employees, the project vision is to improve the health and well-being of state employees - Connecticut's largest workforce - thereby increasing productivity, and reducing absenteeism and overall health care costs.

Keeping Warm in the Extreme Cold

Winter and extreme cold affect the body in many ways. If you plan on going out during winter months, consider these recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

1- Heat can leave the body more rapidly when temperatures drop below normal and wind speed increases. Adults and children should wear a hat, mittens, or gloves and a scarf or facemask when venturing outside. Dressing in layers of loose fitting clothing, water-resistant boots and a jacket will also help to keep you warm. Remember that shivering is one of the first indicators of lost body heat. If shivering is persistent, return indoors.

Cold weather can also put extra strain on the heart. People that have heart disease or high blood pressure should follow doctors' advice on heavy work and exercise. Your body is working hard to keep warm; do not over exert yourself.

2-Many injuries incurred during the winter months are caused by falling on ice. Make sure to keep sidewalks, stairs and porches clear of ice by applying rock salt or a layer of sand to reduce the risk of slipping. If you exercise outside, choose a jogging or walking route that is clear of icy sidewalks.

3- While participating in cold weather recreational activities like skating, skiing or sledding, make sure that skin is not left exposed. Try to avoid perspiring and becoming overtired. Plan on bringing a change of dry clothes in case you get wet or perspire.

For other safety recommendations during times of extreme cold refer to "Extreme Cold: A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety" on the CDC website.

References: www.cdc.gov

Boost Your Immunity Through Exercise!

Studies have shown that people who exercise experience fewer episodes of colds than people who are inactive. In a survey of 700 recreational runners, 61% reported having fewer colds since they began running. In another study of 170 experienced runners, 90% reported that they “rarely get sick.” In two well-controlled studies with young and elderly women who walked briskly for 35-45 minutes, 5 days a week, the study participants who were active reported half the days of cold symptoms compare to inactive individuals.

Eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables provide vitamins and nutrients and make your body more efficient in fighting illness. Furthermore, drinking plenty of fluids and sleeping at least 7 hours a night will keep your immune system healthy.

If you develop a cold, ease back into your exercise program as soon as you are feeling up to it. The

longer it takes to get back into your exercise routine, the more difficult it will be to adopt the exercise regime into your lifestyle again. Keep in mind when suffering from a common cold, mild-to-moderate exercise, such as walking, does not appear to be harmful; in fact it may actually help in the healing process. If you have symptoms such as fever, extreme tiredness, muscle aches, and swollen lymph glands, it is recommended to withhold from intensive training for 2-4 weeks.

Remember, prevention is the key to fighting the common cold.

Reference: Nieman, D., et. al, Exercise and the Common Cold, Current Comment from the ACSM, February 1998, www.acsm.org

FEBRUARY 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1		2 	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
11	12	13	14 	15 	16	17	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
25	26	27	28				

Schedule of Events

- January 30-
DAS Island Hopper Pedometer Walking Program Kick-off
- February 1 & 15-
Check your email for ConnectiFIT's Healthy Tip
- February 2-
National Wear Red Day
- February 14-
ConnectiFIT Healthy Living Seminar on Cardiovascular Disease Risks, presented by Janet Leonardi at noon in 470 Conference Room A/B at the DPH.



Upcoming ConnectiFIT Programs

This year, ConnectiFIT is introducing a new physical activity program. The *Capital City Climb* is a stair-climbing program that counts the number of flights that each participant ascends throughout the day.

During the *Capital City Climb*, each participant is encouraged to increase their physical activity each day by taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Participants will be given log sheets to keep track of how many flights they climb. These sheets highlight Hartford buildings and include the building's number of stories. The *Capital City Climb* will include Hartford's fifteen tallest buildings. Each time participants climb up a flight of stairs they can mark off one of the building's stories.

The *Capitol City Climb* is a great program to participate in during the winter months. Conditions

outside can be unpredictable and unfavorable for physical activity. The *Capital City Climb* can be done without ever stepping outdoors.

There are many health benefits associated with climbing stairs. Besides being a great way to meet the daily recommendation of 30 minutes of physical activity a day, studies have shown that intermittent stair climbing yields additional health benefits. One study showed that participants that started climbing one flight of stairs per day and progressed to climbing six flights of stairs each day found improvements in their heart rate, HDL (good cholesterol) levels, and cardiovascular health.

Further information about the *Capital City Climb* will be sent to all DPH employees via email.

References: www.Ace-Fitness.org

Preventive Medicine, 2000; 30, 4, 277-281

ConnectiFIT Introduces New Programs

ConnectiFIT has many new program offerings in the new year. To compliment the stair climbing program, ConnectiFIT will be offering three new ongoing programs in 2007 and will continue to offer monthly Healthy Living Seminars at the DPH and DAS.

Buddy Program:

ConnectiFIT will be sending out Buddy request forms in the new year. The Buddy Program will try to match employees that would like a partner or group to support a shared healthy behavior. Some activities you may like a buddy for are stair climbing, walking during breaks, healthy recipe exchanges or weekly healthy lunch dates.

Fitness Consultations:

ConnectiFIT fitness consultations will be held weekly this year. This new offering gives employees the chance to have a fifteen minute individualized consultation with a personal trainer. Consultations are available on Tuesdays from 10-

and 2-3 pm at the DPH and on Thursdays from 10-11 am and 2-3 pm at the DAS. A fitness consultation request form can be found on the ConnectiFIT website.

ConnectiFIT Healthy Tips:

ConnectiFIT has begun a healthy email campaign. Bi-monthly emails containing health and wellness tips will be sent out to DAS and DPH employees. Be sure to check your inbox for this healthful information.

DPH Healthy Living Seminars:

February is American Heart Month. A speaker from the American Heart Association will be presenting the Healthy Living Seminar on February 14.

March is host to Diabetes Alert Day. Cindy Kozak will be presenting the Healthy Living Seminar on Thursday March 22nd.

More information on all of these programs can be found online at www.connectifit.uconn.edu.