



# Monthly Health Watch



News with a Monthly Health Theme

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## **Aetna Celebrates National Employee Health & Fitness Day, May 20th *Employees and Their Bosses Tell All on Working out at Work***

*By Lonny Reisman, M.D., Aetna's Chief Medical Officer*



Lonny Reisman, M.D.

### **Working Out at Work: Fitness Isn't Just for Weekends Anymore**

"I sit all day." "I'm so busy I never leave my computer." As Aetna's chief medical officer, I take such comments to heart.

For those of us who spend our days face to face with a computer, our job can be very sedentary. It is hard to find the energy - or time - to get moving during the workday.

But if you think "getting fit at work" is a contradiction in terms, think again. There are actually many ways to put your workplace to work ... for a fitter you.

### ***Getting Active at Aetna***

Aetna will celebrate National Employee Health & Fitness Day May 20<sup>th</sup> with the launch of our third straight year of Get Active Aetna, a 16-week employee fitness challenge. This program gives our employees the structure and resources to exercise and feel better. Regardless of fitness level, we encourage employees to move more, get stronger, and get active with co-workers, family and friends so they can help improve their health.

Employees simply track "exercise activity points," with the goal of achieving 2,500 over the course of four months. Last year 19,000 Aetna employees participated. That's more than half of our workforce! Every employee who completed the program won a prize. And big-ticket raffle prizes added even more incentive.

From a business standpoint, we believe workplace fitness can help make our workforce more robust. Employee wellness is a high priority at Aetna. You could even say it is the core of our business. So it only makes sense to encourage and reward employees to Get Active Aetna.

### **Get moving!**

Talk to your employer about starting a workplace fitness program at your company. Explain that working out at work can help employees adopt a healthier lifestyle and be more productive workers. Consider a team approach. Forming teams builds camaraderie and adds to your chances of success. You will make time for that exercise break if your teammates are counting on you.

## ***Success Stories: Real Tips from Real People***

### ***Joel***

"I started riding my bike 14 miles each way to work every day, and by doing so, it's helped me lose 50 pounds," says Joel Riddell, a long-term disability analyst for Aetna in Portland, Oregon, who paired joining Get Active Aetna with a weight loss program.



### ***Tips***

- **Reward yourself.** "When I hit the 50-pound mark, I treated myself to a nice new road bike."
- **Get rid of your 'fat clothes.'** "Once you meet your weight goal, go through your closet, pull out all of the clothes that are too big, and give them to charity," suggests Joel.
- **Lean on friends and colleagues.** "My co-workers are like a mini-support group within the office; this really helps."

Photos to left show Joel before and after his weight loss journey.

### ***Susan***

Susan Rubio, a distributed support manager for Aetna Information Services, based in Boston, has lost 32 inches from her body and dropped her dress size from a 16 to a 6. She credits Get Active Aetna with "getting her off the mark" to get in shape.

### ***Tips:***

- **Find workout buddies.** "It's so easy to say you're busy and just keep working. So we push each other. We say to each other, 'Put on your pedometer – we're going for a walk' and force ourselves to go out. The teamwork helps."
- **Focus on today.** "Don't get overwhelmed with a long-term, 'big' goal. Ask yourself, 'What is my goal for today?' If you don't meet your goals one day, set them again tomorrow. You'll get there."
- **Make time for exercise.** "It's so easy to get caught up in the drudgery of the day, but if you take a little better care of yourself, the sun shines just a little brighter."



Photos above show Susan's before and after comparison

### ***Cheryl***

Cheryl Deal, a senior technical team representative for Aetna in Arlington, Texas recently lost 56 pounds, due in part to Get Active Aetna. She says she "feels a whole lot better in every way," and her newfound confidence has even inspired her to go back to school to pursue her Master's degree.



Photos above show Cheryl's transformation

**Tips:**

- **Stop taking the elevator.** "I make sure I take the stairs up to the third floor, where I work, at least six times a day. This was really hard at first, but it's not hard anymore and has made a huge difference," she says.
- **Park far away.** "Whether I'm at work or at Wal-Mart, I park at the back of the parking lot."
- **Lead by example.** To encourage her teenage daughter to get in shape, too, Cheryl takes part in activities that she and her daughter can do together. "We walk or go roller-skating three times a week. We make sure we do something active."

**Just START! Your Business Can Do it Too: No Office Gym Required**

Aetna's commitment to improving health and wellness goes beyond company walls to helping our customers create a culture of health and fitness at their companies. One way we do this is through charitable giving. Since 2007, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed more than \$1.1 million for the Start! Program. The American Heart Association created Start! to fight heart disease through physical activity at work. Start! gives advice on setting up walking routes at work, and rewarding employees who use them. Companies can win certification as a "Fit-Friendly Company."

**Success Stories: Real Tips From Real Business Leaders:**

Start! works best when CEOs walk with their employees. Robert Mendonsa, the general manager who introduced Start! at Aetna, wouldn't have it any other way. He walks the walk and has even done so at 5am on a cold Chicago morning to promote Start! on local TV. His efforts paid off. Hundreds of employees in Aetna's Chicago office walked together last month to celebrate National Start! Walking Day.

**Robert's Rules of Order for Walking at Work:**

- **Keep it Simple.** The beauty of Start! is its simplicity. It doesn't cost much to implement yet it offers practical, sustainable path to a healthier lifestyle. We communicated how many laps around the office equaled a mile and encouraged employees to do their one-on-one meetings on their feet. That was enough to get us started.
- **Participation starts at the top.** Employees won't hesitate to take a fitness break if their manager invites them to come along. You can even "cheat" and brainstorm work ideas while you walk.
- **Encourage employees to add their own touch.** In our office, a group of "Dedicated Divas" set a goal to walk 5 days a week. They took a company initiative and made it their own. As a result, they are more likely to keep to their walking schedule even when the next big project looms.

**Tips from a Dedicated Diva:**

The Start! program helped Lolita Thompson, an Aetna health care consultant, lower her cholesterol and reduce high blood pressure. At her last checkup, her doctor told her she had achieved the perfect body weight for her height and could come off her medication. All because of her walking. She suggests:

- **Find a buddy.** Sometimes peer pressure can be a good thing. Just grab a partner and go
- **Start at your own level.** Walking is something nearly everyone can do. And it doesn't cost anything. In challenging economic times, it is the best way to get started.
- **Make it part of your daily routine.** Walk a little bit every day. On busy days, walk for a shorter period of time. Once you get out there, the good feelings you get will keep you going.

### WorkPlace Fitness on the Web

- ✚ Everything a business needs to Start! a walking program at work is available on the American Heart Association website at [www.mystartonline.org/home.jsp](http://www.mystartonline.org/home.jsp)
- ✚ IntelliHealth has instructions for "desk side" exercises employees can do in front of their computer. IntelliHealth is Aetna's online source of trusted health information developed with Harvard Medical School. Try these out the next time your conference call runs long.  
[www.intelihealth.com/IH/ih/IH/WSIHW000/20813/8254.html](http://www.intelihealth.com/IH/ih/IH/WSIHW000/20813/8254.html)