

# Sport and physical activity involving staff

Being physically active contributes to positive physical and mental health in a variety of ways:

- creates opportunities for social connection
  - improves psychological health and ability to manage mental ill-health
  - reduces risk of chronic diseases including: cardiovascular disease, type II diabetes and some cancers
  - builds strong muscles and bones
  - improves quality of life.
- For more information on how you can safely become more physically active, including the National Physical Activity Guidelines, visit [Physical wellbeing](#) on OnePortal.
- For more assistance on planning a Staff Wellbeing Program contact your [Regional Wellbeing Coordinator](#) or visit [Planning a Staff Wellbeing Program](#) on OnePortal.
- This factsheet is targeted at department staff undertaking physical activities at their place of work. If you are wanting to manage the risks of school curriculum activities please refer to the [CARA procedure](#).

## Readiness to participate

Some examples of when you may need to think about your physical readiness:

- when supervising student sport and physical activity
- when participating in sporting games such as basketball or soccer with students
- when participating in an endorsed wellbeing program i.e. a walking group as part of a staff wellbeing program.

Injuries, including sprains and strains can easily occur if physical activity is undertaken infrequently and without adequate preparation. When staff are supervising or participating in sport and physical activity, it is important to plan ahead to ensure the safety of adults and students involved in the activity.

## Managing the risks – for managers and activity organisers

It is the responsibility of each workplace to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to ensure safety when participating in workplace arranged physical activities. Risks associated with physical activities can be managed by planning e.g.:

1. Conducting a [risk assessment](#). This will help you identify potential hazards and plan to manage (control) the associated risks e.g. by establishing some activity 'rules'.
  - Consider the physical environment where the activity will be taking place. The location must be suitable for the activity, with sufficient space, adequate lighting and ventilation to ensure safe participation. Be aware of obstructions or other hazards and be considerate of others e.g. neighbouring classes.
  - Consider risks associated with sun/heat/cold and times the activity is conducted. Ensure individuals have access to a water supply and shade where possible.
  - Ensure any equipment being used is safe and appropriate for the activity and users.



- Remember any associated activities, e.g. set up and pack up. Moving equipment that maybe large, heavy or awkward may pose manual handling risks – ensure there is a process to minimise risks – e.g. trolleys/equipment to help move, extra assistance, adequate time allocated and good storage.
  - Identify and manage first aid needs e.g. ensure access to first aid assistance and equipment is available, consider having staff present who are trained in first aid and/or using qualified fitness instructors who hold first aid qualifications and professional indemnity insurance.
2. Ensuring each participant has information about the activity both to consider their preparedness to participate and so they can follow safety rules for the activity. Some participants may want to provide information about the activity to their doctor to determine their suitability. It is also advisable that staff who intend to be involved in the physical activity complete a pre-screening physical activity questionnaire - [Exercise Sports Science Australia's pre-exercise screening system](#).
  3. Ensure the principal or manager is aware of staff physical activities programs and there is a process for approval of the risk management strategy.
  4. Monitor and review controls to ensure they remain appropriate. Ensure someone is nominated for this task and they are able to coordinate appropriate action as required.

## Safe physical activity

Everybody is different and it is important for us all to be aware of our health, risk of injury, level of fitness and personal limitations. Factors to consider when you are playing or demonstrating sport or being involved in physical activities are your:

- expertise in the activity
- fitness
- age
- medical health

Staff should seek medical advice prior to participating in physical activity if they have not regularly been physically active or have answered yes to any of the questions in the [Exercise Sports Science Australia's pre-exercise screening system](#).

## During sport, exercise or physical activity

- Follow the activity 'rules'.
- Remember to wear comfortable/suitable clothing and footwear. Remove excess jewellery.
- Start slowly and allow your body to warm up before undertaking physical activity or sport.
- Consider taking a short 5-10 minute walk and completing gentle stretches, such as [daily stretches for staff](#), before participating in sport.
- Walk through demonstrations as this will help explain what is involved.
- Build up your level of activity over a number of weeks, and if necessary with the advice of your GP, rather than over-exerting yourself too quickly. This will assist in avoiding muscle soreness and injury.
- Take some time to warm down after your activity – some gentle stretching and a short walk will help.



## Hydration

- Remember to drink water before, during and after activities. Don't wait until you are thirsty or start sweating. Dehydration can contribute to headaches, fatigue, decrease in performance, cramps, heat stress and heat stroke.
- Drink 150-200 ml of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes, rather than consuming large volumes every now and again.
- Choose water rather than tea, coffee, milk or soft drink.
- Increase your intake of fluids if your urine is dark as this is a clear indicator of dehydration (normal colour is pale yellow).
- If you suffer dehydration, ensure you rehydrate as soon as possible.

## More information

- visit [Health, Safety and Wellbeing](#) on OnePortal
- Contact your [Regional Health and Safety Consultant](#) or Regional [Wellbeing Consultant](#)

