

# Workplace activity programs can help with stress, anxiety and sleep

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Physical activity programs at work can have a positive impact on employee well-being, new research shows, and the powerful benefits can be seen in as little as two months.

A study of participants in a 50-day workplace program of daily activity found workers who completed the program reported feeling significantly less anxious, stressed and depressed as well as more alert during the day and sleeping better at night.

The research by Deakin University's Institute for Health Transformation (IHT), published in *Current Psychology* found anxiety levels improved by nearly 20 percent, stress improved by 13 percent and depressive symptoms improved by nearly 10 percent.

Participants also reported better [sleep habits](#), feeling less tired during the daytime with an improved sense of well-being (up by 6.7 percent).

IHT Director Professor Anna Peeters said the study highlighted the benefits of engaging workplace communities and enhancing workplace culture to boost workers' mental and physical [health](#).

"Unlike clinical trials, this study looked at a real-world application to two very large problems, mental health and daily [physical activity](#)," Professor Peeters said. "It shows that both can be improved by involving employees in an engaging workplace-based [wellness program](#)."

The study involved nearly 3000 employees from organizations across Australia and New Zealand who participated in an online workplace wellness program.

Participants logged their daily physical activity (steps completed) and tracked their own as well as their teams' progress. They also completed a questionnaire at the start and end of the 50 days.

"Previous research has shown that physical activity is an important self-care tool for improving the physical and mental health of workers and this research shows that significant improvements can occur in a

relatively short space of time," Professor Peeters said.

"We found that the greater participants involvement in the program, the more effective it was in improving all the well-being measures, particularly anxiety and an overall feeling of well-being.

"More than half of the world's population (58 percent) spend one third of their life at work, so workplaces are an essential health promotion setting.

"Public health efforts must be directed to support the health and well-being of the workplace community and tailored programs designed to better support the health and well-being of workplace communities.

"A health-promoting workplace has the ability to enhance emotional, physical, and mental well-being, leading to good quality job performance of its employees and the larger [workplace](#) communities," Professor Peeters said.

**More information:** Karen T. Hallam et al, Moving minds: Mental health and wellbeing benefits of a 50-day workplace physical activity program, *Current Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s12144-021-02525-6](#)

Provided by Deakin University

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