



# INSTANT RECESS<sup>®</sup> TOOLKIT

Recess is back!



## Introduction: *Instant Recess*

### The problem

Let's face it. We sit too much and don't move enough. As Dr. Toni Yancey, creator of *Instant Recess* explains, less than five percent of American adults meet the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity, five days a week. Two thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. Kaiser Permanente (KP) mirrors the national average — according to aggregate health data, over 67 percent of KP employees are overweight or obese. Sedentary workers use more sick time, have less productive work days, and suffer higher rates of injury.

A sedentary lifestyle puts you at increased risk for:

- Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Osteoporosis
- Hypertension
- Chronic kidney disease
- Vascular dementia
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Alzheimer's disease

### A fun and easy solution

*Instant Recess* is a quick, easy, and fun way to fit physical activity into your workday. Dr. Toni Yancey, author of *Instant Recess: Building a Fit Nation 10 Minutes at a Time*, co-director of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Equity, and Professor of Health Policy and Management at UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health, created *Instant Recess* to add physical activity, a few minutes at a time, into our daily lives – at work, at school, and in our leisure time. Dr. Yancey's research has shown that adding short recess breaks to the work day can help employees control their weight and decrease depression, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

A healthier team means employees who have better attendance, are more productive, and suffer fewer injuries. KP work units that have implemented *Instant Recess* are getting great results. Labs, pharmacies, call centers, and even patient care units have all lowered absentee rates and injuries while boosting teamwork and morale.

While a few minutes may not seem like a long time, research has found that any amount of physical activity, no matter how small, can have health benefits. Additionally, individuals who participate in *Instant Recess* have been found to increase their physical activity and other healthy behaviors outside of work.



Increases	Decreases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Productivity</li><li>▪ Cognitive processing efficiency</li><li>▪ Speed and accuracy of data-entry</li><li>▪ Energy levels</li><li>▪ Employee morale</li><li>▪ Engagement of inactive individuals</li><li>▪ Mood, self-efficacy; self-esteem</li><li>▪ Fruit and vegetable consumption</li><li>▪ Overall physical activity (outside of work)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Absenteeism</li><li>▪ Injuries (ergonomic and accidental)</li><li>▪ Health care costs</li><li>▪ Urge to smoke</li><li>▪ Stress and anxiety</li><li>▪ Harmful effects of prolonged sitting</li><li>▪ Weight and BMI</li></ul>

From Dr. Yancey's book, *Instant Recess®: Building a Fit Nation 10 Minutes at a Time*

It's really that simple. Just a few minutes a day can lead to improved health for your employees, your department, and Kaiser Permanente.

The investment to bring *Instant Recess* to your department is very minimal. All you need is a few minutes of time, a couple of *Instant Recess* leaders, some music, and a small space where employees can gather. *Let's get started!*





## Get Ready

### Creating your action plan

Departments that regularly participate in *Instant Recess* have significantly improved attendance, decreased injuries, and have boosted morale and performance measures. Teams look to *Instant Recess* to help them relieve their stress. The activity acts as a re-set button after a stressful call, time, or interaction.

Use this form below to create an action plan to get *Instant Recess* started in your department or facility. Make sure to use SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound).

#### **My *Instant Recess* Action Plan**

My goal is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(SMART goal example: To start *Instant Recess* in my department once per day for 5 minutes by May 6, 2013.)

How confident are you that you can start *Instant Recess* with your team?

0      1      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

0 = not at all confident

10 = totally confident

If your confidence level is below a 7, what would need to happen to increase it to at least a 7?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Things that could make it difficult to start *Instant Recess* in your department?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Example: small space, hectic department, etc.)

What is your plan for overcoming these barriers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What support and resources will you need to bring *Instant Recess* to your team?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the first step you will take and when will you take it?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Safety Guidelines

*Instant Recess* is simple, easy, and fun. But it's still important to be safe. Follow these safety guidelines to make sure no one gets injured and everyone has a good time.

**Comfort level.** *Instant Recess* should always be conducted at the level at which everyone feels comfortable. Begin by demonstrating the most simplistic version of the activity. After everyone has mastered the movements, feel free to move to more advanced exercises, but let each individual participate at the level that works for them. Offer movement modifications to meet participants at their comfort level. Keep in mind that *Instant Recess* participation is always voluntary. Anyone who wants to participate should be able to join in and have a good time, but never insist.

**Attire.** *Instant Recess* is designed to be conducted in any sort of attire, from scrubs to business suits. However, suggest that participants wearing high-heels or uncomfortable shoes remove them. While sneakers are not necessary, this is a great opportunity to encourage everyone to keep a pair at their desk, work station, or locker — for these breaks and taking walks on their lunch hour!

**Movements.** Begin with just lower body movements and then add in the upper body. Combining lower and upper body movements maximizes calorie burning and improves coordination. Allow everyone to participate at their own level and in their own way. It's important to have movements that include everyone. For example, if a participant is unable to move the lower body, have a few alterations ready such as clapping or drumming to the beat. Another idea is to ask the person ahead of time if they would like to call out the exercise moves for the group. You can always check out other ideas for different moves in the *Instant Recess* at [KP "Get Moving Library"](#). Always remind participants that they can adjust the intensity of the movement to suit their fitness level. You might want to have two people leading the *Instant Recess*, with one modeling higher-intensity movements and the other modeling lower-intensity movements. If participants feel tired, encourage them to continue using their lower body while taking an upper body break. Those who are unable to engage in the lower body portion of activities can complete the upper body movements from a chair. The important thing is for everyone to keep moving.

**No pain no gain?** Be attentive to injury prevention. Exercises may produce mild discomfort but should never produce pain, make sure participants understand the difference. If an exercise is producing pain, participants should adopt a less strenuous modification or return to lower or upper body movement only until beginning the next exercise.

### Rules of thumb for good form:

**Never bounce when stretching.** Bouncing may cause the muscles to stretch farther than their capacity and may result in injury. All stretches should be held static while participants focus on their breathing. Remind participants that increased flexibility will come over time.

**Never "lock out" a joint.** Always keep a slight bend should in the elbow and knee joints to prevent injury.

**Always bend from the hips,** not the waist, and hold abdominal muscles tight to protect the lower back.

**Breathe.** Participants should never hold their breath. Instruct participants to focus on taking deep breaths throughout the break, inhaling through their nose and exhaling through their mouth. Exhale at the exertion portion of strength exercises.





## Measuring Success

### Improvements

Adding *Instant Recess* to your department will make some improvements. Tracking those improvements will help keep *Instant Recess* going! In addition to sick leave and injuries, which you can measure below, you can also informally track stress levels and attitude changes in the workplace. You can also download a spreadsheet [here](#).

	Sick Time Usage (Days per month)	Injuries	Average number of minutes spent being active together	Comments
Month 1				
Month 2				
Month 3				
Month 4				
Month 5				
Month 6				
Month 7				
Month 8				
Month 9				
Month 10				
Month 11				
Month 12				



## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is *Instant Recess*?** *Instant Recess* consists of short (3 - 10 minute) physical activity breaks built into the work day. The basic exercises can be performed easily by individuals of varied fitness levels at varying levels of intensity, with minimal risk of injury.

**Why are we doing this?** *Instant Recess* was designed to change work culture norms to increase moderate regular physical activity participation. Integrating brief bouts of structured exercise into the daily work routine has been shown to improve health, lessen injuries, and boost team morale.

**What are the benefits?** By participating in *Instant Recess* you may experience the following: increased fitness, more energy, better mood, and a general sense of wellbeing. Benefits can be obtained from physical activity breaks as brief as 10 minutes at a time.

**Will I get extra breaks if I choose to not participate?** No. *Instant Recess* is separate from your allowed breaks. These activity breaks are being encouraged as a part of overall KP workforce wellness.

**What if I get hurt?** Exercises may produce mild discomfort but should never produce pain. Be sure to know the difference. If an exercise is producing pain, adopt a less strenuous modification or return to lower or upper body movement only until beginning the next exercise. However, if an injury does occur, your worker's compensation benefits will cover you.

**What do I wear?** Exercises are designed to be conducted in any sort of attire – from scrubs to business suits. However, please remove any high-heels or uncomfortable shoes. You may want to bring in a pair of tennis shoes to keep at work just for recess breaks, and perhaps for other break time activities as well!

**What if it is too hard, or too easy?** *Instant Recess* activities are designed for all fitness levels. Begin with the most simplistic version of the exercise at a moderate intensity. After you feel comfortable with the movements, you can move on to more advanced modifications. More fit participants can always increase the intensity and speed of any movement.

**I'm pretty active at work, isn't that enough?** Being active and on your feet at work may not be intense enough for the health benefits of physical activity. The goal of *Instant Recess* is to get your heart rate up and your blood pumping.

**I'm pretty fit and active in my leisure time. Why do I need *Instant Recess*?** *Instant Recess* puts play back in your day. Not only does it get you moving, it has been shown to increase mood, energy level, employee morale and decrease stress.

**If I feel tired, won't this make me more tired?** It seems counter-intuitive, but most people find that physical activity actually increases their energy. After the recess break, employees return to work refreshed and energized.

**I have a health condition. Can I still participate?** Health problems may make physical activity a little more difficult when you begin. But over time, these health conditions can actually improve. If you have a chronic illness or condition or are over the age of 40, be sure to check with your healthcare provider before beginning your program. Start slowly, build up, and each day it should become easier.



# Fitting in Fitness

*Instant Recess* is one component of a healthy and active lifestyle. Once you get started you're likely to find you're eager to incorporate even more activity into your daily routine. You don't have to spend hours at the gym or even change clothes. Try some of these quick and easy ideas to fit in fitness into your day:

**Join the walking movement.** KP Walk! is a fun online program that encourages us all to "walk the talk" by walking 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. Join KP Walk! today by visiting: <http://www.kpwalk.com/>. Step Up. Walk on.

**Take the stairs.** Whenever possible, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Stair climbing burns more calories than jogging — 200 calories in just 20 minutes. The steps will help you feel refreshed when you arrive at your destination.

**Have a walking meeting.** Use a regular meeting time to walk (inside or out). You'll be surprised at how much you can get accomplished while walking and talking.

**Park far away.** Take that spot at the back of the parking lot instead of circling around trying to find the closest one to work or the store. You'll actually save time and get your heart rate up.

**Make it social.** Take time before or after dinner to walk with your family or a close friend. Or use the time to call a friend. Get a group of friends together and go bowling, dancing, skating, or play active games.

**Take public transport.** Taking public transport is good for you and the planet. Try taking the bus or train to work a couple days a week. It has been found that train commuters walk an average of 30 percent more steps than car commuters.

**Get active with your kids.** Is most of your family time spent in front of the TV? Be a role model for them. Play catch, tag, or their favorite sport. Cold or dark outside? Turn on some music and have a dance party. And while you wait for your kids to finish practice, lessons, or games, take the time to go for a quick walk. Pack your walking shoes in advance.

**Turn your chores into workouts.** Mopping, sweeping, yard work, even folding laundry burns calories and builds muscle. Turn on your favorite tunes to amp up your chores and your heart rate.

**Bike to work.** It saves you money, is great for your health, and can even be faster than driving! You can actually be twice as fast on your bike than in your car stuck in traffic. And you never have to worry about finding a parking spot.