

WELCOA's
News & Views

Taking a **Stand**
on
Sitting Down

Dr. Steven Blair
sheds light
on sedentary
lifestyles



For more interviews, visit
www.welcoa.org



About Dr. Steven Blair



Steven Blair, an exercise scientist, has been researching the health benefits of physical activity for more than 25 years, first at the Cooper Institute in Dallas and currently at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health. He is a former president of the American College of Sports Medicine.

WELCOA's News Views

An Expert Interview with
Steven Blair, PED

About Dr. Mike Perko



Dr. Mike Perko is a WELCOA Consultant and an Associate Professor in the Department of Public Health Education at the University of North Carolina–Greensboro. Dr. Perko was the former Associate Director of the Good Health Makes Sense program, a comprehensive worksite health promotion and disease prevention initiative for employees, spouses and retirees of Alabama and Gulf Power Companies. In 2003, Dr. Perko was named Health Educator of the Year in North Carolina.



Dr. *Steven Blair is one of the nation's most respected researchers in the area of physical activity. In this capacity, he's a firm believer that sitting too much is bad for you. And he has a growing crowd of supporters. Recent research from the University of Columbia Missouri reveals that being seated for longer than four hours negates any exercise a person has done. So, stand up and take notice of what you and your employees really need to know about physical activity.*



PERKO: How worried should we be about physical activity levels in the U.S.? Are the current numbers accurate?

BLAIR: I think physical inactivity is probably the biggest public health problem we have in this country. If we look at physical activity levels, as reported in the national surveys, those numbers have been fairly stable and accurate for more than three decades. I would say that we need better data and more data on total energy expenditure; occupational energy expenditure has dramatically changed. Being a clerk in a shoe store is not really a heavy-duty occupational job. But a clerk in a shoe store is going to spend a whole lot more energy over the course of the day than someone who sits at a computer all of the time. Far too many people sit far too much, and this is a huge public health problem.

P: How quickly can employees who become physically active start to see some physiological changes that will help them get healthier?

B: I think in about 30 seconds. Just imagine that you've been sitting there hammering away at your computer for a couple of hours. If you walk down the hall to your colleagues' office instead of sending them an e-mail, you actually feel better right away—just by getting up and moving a little bit. Physiological adaptations occur after a single bout of activity, including lower blood pressure and all kinds of metabolic adaptations. Of course, if you're talking about preventing heart attack, it would require a more sustained period of time.

It's really worth repeating that when people sit too much, they will suffer from negative metabolic physiologic adaptations. But, when they get up and move a bit, they can begin to reverse those effects. What's better is that you don't have to go for a 10-minute walk to experience the benefits. In fact, there's some very interesting research in Australia that simply looked at breaks in sedentary time. These breaks just consisted of standing and moving a little bit. This research found that those who took a number of breaks in sedentary time over the course of the day experienced positive changes in several metabolic variables, such as triglycerides, blood pressure and waist circumferences.

P: Do you see this type of physical activity—just being mindful of getting up and maybe walking one flight of stairs and coming back—as something that can be commonly implemented at the workplace?

B: The research on this is building, and I think we need to continue to get this message out there. We need to look for opportunities to stand rather than sit. We

About WELCOA

The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) was established as a national not-for-profit organization in the mid 1980's through the efforts of a number of forward-thinking business and health leaders. Drawing on the vision originally set forth by William Kizer, Sr., Chairman Emeritus of Central States Indemnity, and WELCOA founding Directors that included Dr. Louis Sullivan, former Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Warren Buffet, Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, WELCOA has helped influence the face of workplace wellness in the U.S.

Today, WELCOA has become one of the most respected resources for workplace wellness in America. With a membership in excess of 3,200 organizations, WELCOA is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of all working Americans. Located in America's heartland, WELCOA makes its national headquarters in one of America's healthiest business communities Omaha, Nebraska.



Log on to www.welcoa.org to learn more.

The Facts...

WELCOA's trademarked Seven Benchmark System for building results-oriented workplace wellness programs has been used by 1,000's of companies throughout the U.S. To learn more about this process simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=16>



have to remember that the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines begin with the statement: More activity is better than less; something is better than nothing. I think that's the message that we need to push a little harder, especially now that the research is beginning to build on this point.

P: How quickly does an inactive person lose the health benefits of being physically active?

B: It's probably very rapid. Again, this is a pretty new area of research, but there was a very interesting report that appeared in JAMA about a year ago. Frank Booth from Missouri and Bente Pedersen of Copenhagen took a group of young men who were normal weight, healthy, and active. They averaged more than 10,000 steps a day at the start of the study, and they voluntarily reduced their steps/day to <1500. Within two weeks, several metabolic variables were deteriorating. So it happens very quickly.

P: How important is the distinction between exercise and being physically active?

B: Well, the most important thing is to be physically active—do something. If you don't like vigorous exercise or going to the gym, and you can fit in three 10-minute walks five days a week or another equivalent activity; you can get most of the health benefits that way. Of course, it's perfectly fine if you meet the activity guidelines with more vigorous exercise. The key is to not sit so much, be up and moving; expend a little bit more energy.

P: Is being physically active a magic bullet?

B: As an academic, I'd have to say that I don't believe in magic, but being physically active is about as close as we can come to a magic treatment to avoid and prevent chronic disease. It

has so many benefits. So I think magic is a strong statement, but it's very beneficial in so many ways.

P: What types of activities can employers encourage during an 8- or 10-hour day?

B: Well, for those who sit and work at computers, you could offer things like standing desks or even the treadmill desk. I don't think it's a good idea to force employees to stand and work at their computer, but I think it would be nice if employers could make that available as an option. One possibility might be to simply have one room with several standing desks or even some treadmill desks or bicycle desks where people might go for an hour or two. They could take their work with them on a flash drive and get on the treadmill and walk along slowly and that would be beneficial.

I think companies should pay more attention to formal worksite physical activity programs. If they can afford to have a gym at the company, I think that's a good idea. Offering discounts for gym memberships is always good. Identifying

WELCOA MEMBERSHIP



More than 3,000 organizations across the U.S. and Canada are members of WELCOA. With the most comprehensive benefits of any organization, WELCOA membership will save you time and money in your quest to build a results-oriented workplace wellness program.

To learn more about how you can become a WELCOA member, simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/member/benefits.php>

another, whether it's a local high school team or the Olympics. I have nothing against sports—I used to be an athlete—but these things have nothing to do with getting people more active. I mean let's face it, if sports and being inspired by sports was sufficient to get more people physically active, Americans would not be as sedentary as they are. It's hard to emphasize sports more than we do. It makes no difference. So it's just a totally separate issue.

MAKE HEALTH BETTER WITH THE HEALTHLETTER



The Well Workplace Healthletter is an effective and extremely cost-efficient solution for any organization that wants to provide their employees with timely and accurate health information. Distributed to millions of employees across the nation, the *Well Workplace Healthletter* is a fun and engaging medium that speaks directly to your employees' needs.

The Well Workplace Healthletter covers all aspects of health and wellness, including:

- Exercise
- Nutrition Facts and Recipes
- Self-Care
- Work and Family
- Personal Finance

The Healthletter promotes positive lifestyle changes and behaviors and is perfect for any organization. To learn more or to order, visit <http://welcoa.org/store>

I am also disappointed that they have changed the name of the President's Council on Physical Fitness to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Nutrition, which will now apparently have much more emphasis on obesity. I do not object to dealing with the public health problem of obesity, but there are a lot of other agencies who do that. I think the President's Council should continue to focus on physical inactivity as a public health problem. I also am concerned that there is not much expertise on the new Council in areas related to physical activity and public health.

P: If we stay the way we are, what's the next 10 years going to bring? What's the next 20 years going to bring?

B: I think it will bring increasing obesity rates and increasing rates of the major chronic diseases. This could probably get worse as we engineer more energy expenditure out of daily life. It's not a pretty picture unless we can turn this around.

I think physical inactivity is probably the biggest public health problem we have in this country.

P: Should people get discouraged if they want to be fit, but they're in their 40s or 50s and they've never been active?

B: No, they shouldn't be discouraged even if they're in their 70s and 80s. There is a recent pilot study called "Lifestyle Independence for Elders." There were four centers around the country, and they recruited men and women ranging from 70 to 89 years of age. The study's participants were sedentary and on a downward slope of function and mobility, moving toward mobility disability. Those who were assigned to the physical activity group improved their function. The full-scale study is now underway in eight centers where the outcome to be tested is whether or not we can prevent mobility disability.

It's important to point out that mobility disability is defined as an inability to walk 400 meters in 15 minutes. When you can't do that, when you cannot walk 400

meters in 15 minutes without assistance, it's a catastrophic health event. Your life falls apart. You can't go shopping, you can't get to the doctor, you can't play with your grandchildren, and on and on. Again, in the pilot study and now in the full-scale study, we're recruiting men and women 70 to 89 years of age. It is never too late to turn it around—get active and get some benefits.

I always like to look back several years to Maria Fiataroni's weight training studies in Boston, in men and women in healthcare facilities and nursing homes. These were

YOUR #1 RESOURCE FOR WORKPLACE WELLNESS INFORMATION



To access hundreds of free documents and receive the latest developments in workplace wellness, visit WELCOA at www.welcoa.org.

It is never too late to turn it around, get active and get some benefits.

people 90 and older and they were in there because they couldn't function in the world. Dr. Fiataroni took these individuals to the weight room and did progressive-resistance weight training with them. She basically said, "Okay, I'm sorry, granny, you can now do three pounds ten times, and now we're going to increase that to four." And were there major side effects? Yeah, the major side effects were they got stronger, got up out of their wheelchairs and were able to function. It is never too late.

P: If you could say one thing to business and health promotion leaders about physical activity what would it be?

B: I would say that they need to use their creativity and intelligence to design their community or their workplace to promote physical activity. There are plenty of opportunities around the community or in the workplace where people can be active. It's the standing desk and the walking desk that we were talking about earlier.

It's really about encouraging people to be active and using the now well-established cognitive and behavioral strategies to change behavior. For example, self-monitoring and goal-setting are great places to begin. That's why we brought pedometers into this line of work 20 years ago. If you want to change your behavior, knowing where you are with that behavior and where you want to go is a pretty useful place to start.

Problem-solving is another great behavioral strategy that needs to be taught and used. Helping people identify what got in the way and why they weren't able to achieve a goal is critical. Can you help people figure out a way around it? Identifying and using social support is another key strategy. I've never had anyone argue with me that social support is a bad thing if you're trying to change a behavior like physical activity. People don't think of it spontaneously, so we remind them. Identify, ask for and learn to use social support, whether it's with co-workers, family, friends or neighbors. If you have somebody in your neighborhood who walks every morning, ask them if you could join them.

I think it's all about getting these cognitive and behavioral strategies out there so people can understand them. These are things that need to be taught; it should be part of the curriculum right up through the 12th grade, and even on to college. Everybody needs to be taught how to do these things.

The Facts...

More than 400 large, medium, and small-sized companies have achieved a Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum-level designation for their workplace wellness initiatives. To learn more simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=19>





Notable & Quotable

from Dr. Steven Blair

The Facts...

WELCOA routinely distributes millions of pieces of health information each year through its award-winning line of health information products including medical self-care books, health brochures, newsletters, and behavior change guides. To learn more simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/store/>

It Doesn't Take Much

We are in the first wave of the information age, with more waves to come. When people sit too much, they will suffer from negative health effects. But, when they get up and move a bit, they can begin to reverse those effects.

PAGE 3

The Need to Get On Your Feet

We need to look for opportunities to stand rather than sit. We have to remember that the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines begin with the statement: More activity is better than less; something is better than nothing.

PAGE 4

It's Not Always About Being A Good Sport

Let's face it, if sports and being inspired by sports, was sufficient to get more people physically active, Americans would not be as sedentary as they are. It's hard to emphasize sports more than we do. It makes no difference. It's just a totally separate issue.

PAGE 6

It's Never Too Late

There is a recent pilot study called "Lifestyle Independence for Elders." There were four centers around the country, and men and women ranging from 70 to 89 years of age were recruited. The study's participants were sedentary on a downward slope of function and mobility, moving toward mobility disability. Those who were assigned to the physical activity group improved their mobility.

PAGE 6

Surefire Strategies

It's really about encouraging people to be active and using the now well-established cognitive and behavioral strategies to change behavior. For example, self-monitoring and goals-setting are great places to begin. That's why we brought pedometers into this line of work 20 years ago.

PAGE 7

A Plan is in Place

On May 3, a national physical activity plan was released. It's the first national plan we've had in this country for physical activity. So, we now have the guidelines; we now have the plan. We just have to get busy implementing the plan.

PAGE 9

P: What are the top three benefits of physical activity?

B: Well, it makes you feel better and more energetic. We have data we published last year from a large, randomized, dose-response trial in post-menopausal women. The groups that got 72 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity had a big jump in their feelings of energy. I think that's really important.

And certainly being physically active is important in weight management, but it also has benefit for so many chronic diseases, like reducing the risk of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, breast cancer and colon cancer. So, preventing chronic diseases and then maintaining function as you live longer are huge benefits. With physical activity your longevity will be greater. I mean, who wants to spend the last years of their life frail, feeble and incontinent in a nursing home? Stay functional and stay fit until the end of life.

P: Can we change this culture in less than a generation to one where physical activity is going to be valued and used the way our body was meant to move?

B: Well, I can be an old grouch and complain about how little we're doing, but then on the other hand when I look back over my 40-plus year career, we've actually come quite a long way. We do have as of 2008 the official U.S. government physical activity guidelines. We now have the stamp of approval that's supposed to permeate all branches of government—so we do have guidelines.

Moreover, on May 3rd of this year we released a national physical activity plan. It's the first national plan we've had in this country for physical activity.

There are eight sectors in the plan, which include the workplace and public health. We proposed strategies and tactics in each of these sectors. So, we now have the guidelines; we now have the plan. We just have to get busy implementing the plan.

ABOUT WELCOA




The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) was established as a national not-for-profit organization in the mid 1980's through the efforts of several forward-thinking business and health leaders. Drawing on the vision originally set forth by William Kizer, Sr., Chairman Emeritus of Central States Indemnity, and WELCOA founding Directors that included Dr. Louis Sullivan, former Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Warren Buffet, Chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, WELCOA has helped influence the face of workplace wellness in the U.S.

The Facts...

More than a thousand business leaders and workplace wellness professionals have completed WELCOA's Level I and Level II training courses and have been certified as WELCOA Well Workplace Certified Practitioners. To learn more simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/wellworkplace/index.php?category=17>



Being physically active is about as close as we can come to a magic treatment to avoid and prevent chronic disease. It has so many benefits.

I do get discouraged when I see government, whether it's local or national, failing to step up and invest in promoting physical activity and other healthful lifestyles. I hope we're making progress. It's not as fast as I would like to see it, as it is just of crucial importance. We spend tens of billions of dollars on genetic research and such, but suppose if we had spent that money on learning better ways to promote healthy lifestyles, to keep kids from starting smoking, to keep kids from becoming sedentary and so forth? It's going to take a major shift in medicine and in academic research to give more value to healthy lifestyle behaviors. I hope it will happen. 

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS

WELCOA 2010 Webinar Series

We are pleased to announce our dynamic 2010 WELCOA Webinar Series. This year, we are focusing on a number of exciting topics that will help you in your quest to build and sustain a results-oriented wellness program. Each Webinar is conducted

by a nationally-recognized expert in the field of workplace wellness. And perhaps best of all, each session is offered in a Webinar format which allows you to access the information without having to leave your office.



*The Webinar series is free to WELCOA Members. If you are a current WELCOA Member and would like to register, please [visit this link](#). If you are not a WELCOA Member, you can still reserve your spot in the paragraphs below. To learn more about WELCOA Membership, [visit this link](#).

Become a WELCOA member for only \$365/yr and attend all these webinars for free or sign-up "a-la-carte" using the links below.

JANUARY

Title: *Demystifying HIPAA*

Date: Wednesday 1/20

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBER SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$69



FEBRUARY

Title: *Part 1: The Art and Science Of Changing Unhealthy Behaviors*

Date: Wednesday 2/3

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

Title: *Part 2: Designing Effective Behavior Change Programs*

Date: Wednesday 2/17

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBERS SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$89



MARCH

Title: *Step By Step: How To Increase Physical Activity In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 3/17

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBER SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$69



APRIL

Title: *Fighting Fatigue: A Practical Approach to Overcoming Fatigue At Work*

Date: Wednesday 4/21

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBERS SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$69



JUNE

Title: *Winning By Losing: How To Promote Healthier Eating In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 6/16

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBER SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$69



SEPTEMBER

Title: *Stressed Less: A Roadmap To Managing Unhealthy Stress In The Workplace*

Date: Wednesday 9/15

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBERS SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$89

Date: Wednesday 9/22

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

Date: Wednesday 9/29

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

NON-MEMBERS SIGN-UP FOR ONLY \$89



“Superb! WELCOA hit the nail on the head... Loved it!”

“...it is comforting to know that... WELCOA exists, and that they are pushing us in the right direction.”



WELCOA 2010 Certification Opportunities

WELCOA has certified more than a thousand of the best and brightest health and business leaders in the U.S. through its comprehensive and dynamic online courses. Here are the opportunities now available for 2010—all certification opportunities are FREE to WELCOA members.

WELCOA members.



*To learn more about the certification series, be sure to visit <http://www.welcoa.org/consulttrain/certifications.php>.

To become a WELCOA member simply visit <http://www.welcoa.org/member/benefits.php>.

► Become a WELCOA member for only \$365/yr and attend all these webinars. These webinars are open only to WELCOA members ◀

MAY

Title: Well Workplace University – Level II: The Seven Best Practices Of Successful Small Business

Date: Wednesdays 5/12, 5/19, 5/26

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central



AUGUST

Title: Well Workplace University – Level II: Health and Safety in the Workplace

Date: Wednesdays 8/11, 8/18, 8/25

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

Title: Well Workplace University – Level III: The Art And Science Of Changing Unhealthy Behaviors

Date: Wednesdays 10/20, 10/27, 11/3, 11/10

Time: 9:30 – 11:00 Central

“WELCOA offers valuable information that is greatly appreciated.”





Wellness Council of America [WELCOA]

9802 Nicholas Street, Suite 315

Omaha, NE 68114

Phone: (402) 827-3590 | Fax: (402) 827-3594

www.welcoa.org