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*“....for the joy of the Lord is
your strength.”
Nehemiah 8:10*

First Steps: Getting Started with Your Program



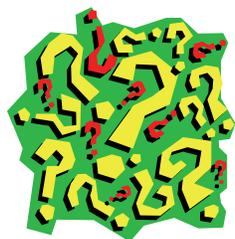
PHYSICAL-E-FIT

*Take action and take care of your temple!
Get 30+ minutes of physical activity a day.
Eat 5+ fruits and vegetables a day.
www.health-e-ame.com*

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“I’ve been trained, now what?”

After attending a Physical-e-Fit training session, you may come home with several feelings. You may be excited about beginning your program, yet slightly overwhelmed at the thought of how much information there is to share with your congregation. This booklet was designed to address some of the most common concerns that have been voiced by other AME Health Directors or Physical Activity Coordinators. We have outlined ideas for overcoming barriers you may face when getting started with your program, including:



- Gathering a good team,
- Finding the time,
- Gaining the help of your pastor and other church leaders,
- Getting the word out,
- Motivating your congregation,
- Keeping it fun and exciting over time, and
- Where to go for support and assistance.

The first steps in starting your program are often the most difficult to accomplish, but you will be rewarded for your efforts with a successful program that helps to improve the health and well-being of your congregation.

“If the Lord delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand.” Psalms 37: 23-24.

Lean on us: technical assistance and support

We’re here to help! Please don’t hesitate to contact us with questions, comments or suggestions you have about the program. There are lots of ways to reach us:

This information was removed since the program has ended.

You can also find lots of program resources, check on upcoming events, see a list of trained churches in your area, submit comments, suggestions or questions, or links to other online resources at www.health-e-ame.com, scroll down and click on the Physical Activity Program button.

Keeping your congregation inspired: maintaining enthusiasm

Once you have your program up and running, it's important to keep people who have joined interested, while continuing to recruit new people. Be sure to continue with your educational activities - this will spread the word and reach those people who still aren't completely sure if physical activity is for them. Try adding a program that you have not offered before as you may reach some new people.

Walking programs offer many opportunities. Try holding a contest between clubs or individuals to compete for the most steps or miles walked. Post your winner on your bulletin board or in the Sunday bulletin. Consider challenging nearby churches who are participating in the program (you can find a list of trained churches on the Health-e-AME website or by contacting the program staff). Use your "Walk a Mile in Your Own Shoes" handout, post a map of the country in a prominent spot, have your members report the number of steps or miles they have walked, and chart their progress across the country. Some members may walk on their own time, log their results and have them turn it into the coordinator.

Don't forget that you can offer 8 Steps to Fitness more than once! Try starting up again in the fall, once the kids are back in school, or in January when everyone is trying to make their New Year resolutions.

If your praise or chair exercise groups are getting bored, try using some new music, or attempt some new moves (contact Debbie Bryant or Thaje Anderson for new ideas). You could also try using some videos; a list is available on the Health-e-AME website or contact the program staff).

Enthusiasm is contagious, so recruit people from your congregation who are excited about physical activity.



Dividing the task to double your success: developing your Physical-e-Fit team

We have discovered that the most common barrier to implementing the Physical-e-Fit program is a **lack of time**. The best way to overcome this is to develop a team who is enthusiastic and excited about physical activity. This will ease the burden on one person, and divide the tasks between several people. Here are some steps you can follow:

1. Make sure that everyone who wishes to be a part of your Physical-e-Fit team is familiar with the program. Contact the program staff (page 7) or log onto the Health-e-AME website (www.health-e-ame.com) to learn about upcoming training events. Have them watch the video to get a feel for the program.
2. Decide which programs would best fit the members of your congregation, and decide who would like to be in charge of each program. It may be easiest to start with educational activities like bulletin inserts or meditations to get your church interested and aware of physical activity. You could try including the "Exercise Your Faith For Ten" CD at various meetings and gatherings to arouse some motivation.
3. Another way to divide the work is to partner with nearby churches. A list of trained churches is available from the program staff or on the Health-e-AME website. Once you have identified some possible partners, have a meeting to plan activities and how to share work and resources. Schedule a regular planning meeting time. Get the contact information of all of your potential partners and designate someone to do reminder calls for meetings and activities.



Following these ideas can help your team successfully start your program without a large time commitment from one individual.

Leading minds, bodies and spirits

Be sure to include church leaders in your program planning. Other faith-based health programs have found that the support of the Pastor, the Pastor's spouse, and other key leaders within the church is a good predictor of the success of the program.

Consult with your pastor about what he or she thinks would be the best programs for your church. Talk with other leaders within the church (the choir director, Young Peoples Division director, women's missionary society president, Sons of Allen coordinator, etc.) about what kind of a role they could play in the Physical-e-Fit program. Set up a time where a member of your team could go and speak with different groups about physical activity, and consider asking them to include a physical activity break at their meetings by using "Exercise Your Faith for Ten" CD or tape.

Encourage your Pastor to visit the Pastor's corner on the Health-e-AME website. It contains resources that were designed specifically for Pastors. Be sure to present your Pastor and their spouse with a pedometer. Consider creating some excitement about the Physical-e-Fit program by presenting the pedometer to your pastor during Sunday service, board meeting, bible study, or another event, and have him or her report their weekly steps during Sunday service!

Church members look to leaders within the church for spiritual guidance, but also to be a role model. Remind your Pastor that his or her participation in the Physical-e-Fit programs speaks louder than words.



Hear ye! Hear ye! Advertisement and enrollment

Time and time again we have heard from Physical-e-Fit program coordinators that another big hurdle to overcome is getting people motivated and involved in the program. Having people that are excited and interested in the program can lead to a successful and enjoyable program for all!

After your team has decided which programs to start, you will need to begin recruiting people to join. Start with some of the educational activities to get people thinking and motivated about physical activity. Try kicking off your program with a pedometer presentation ceremony to your Pastor and his or her spouse, or any other interested church leaders. You can use church bulletin inserts (available on the Health-e-AME website) to advertise the programs that you are starting, and inform your congregation about the benefits of regular physical activity. Try some of the following ideas for getting the word out:

- Create a bulletin board devoted to physical activity, healthy eating and other health topics. Include information about your programs, contact information for your Physical-e-Fit team, and upcoming events for your programs.
- Consider featuring a testimonial on your bulletin board or in the Sunday bulletin from members of your church who are physically active that includes how they started being physically active and how it makes them feel.
- Create fliers for your program, and include a description of the activity, contact information, and possible times and locations.
- Try colored paper or balloons to catch people's attention.
- Having a health fair can also attract people to your program. Include information about the benefits of physical activity for people of all ages and disease states.
- Invite local organizations or agencies that promote physical activity like instructors from the YMCA or recreational department. You could also try inviting a dietician from a nearby hospital or DHEC.

