

101 Low-cost ideas for worksite wellness

The following ideas for worksite wellness can be implemented with limited resources. Many of these ideas have been found to help employees of all physical abilities maintain their health.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

1. Encourage employees to walk to a specific location and log individual miles for incentive prizes.
2. Participate in community walks (i.e., March of Dimes or walks for heart disease or cancer). Ask your company to sponsor employee participants or to match employee contributions.
3. Map out indoor and outdoor walking trails accessible to employees of all abilities. Measure the distance in halls and around the building to help employees set walking goals.
4. Encourage managers to hold walking meetings when gathering with a small number of employees.
5. Offer flexible lunch periods and breaks to encourage individual, group or “buddy” walks.
6. Offer incentives for distance parking and for employees who walk or bicycle to work.
7. Promote a stairwell (“Stair Well”) climbing competition. Convert stairwells to walking areas by improving the lighting and adding of colorful posters.
8. Suggest that employees stretch for one minute before work each day. Announce a one-minute stretch on the intercom system.
9. Encourage physical activity breaks during long meetings and conferences.
10. Identify places within the worksite or around the building for physical activities.
11. Start a running, biking, walking or line dancing club.
12. Encourage employer-sponsored youth athletic teams, along with employee volunteer coaches.
13. Have a goal of the week or month (i.e., “I will exercise every day for a week”). Keep a chart of weekly or monthly exercise goals in the office.
14. Negotiate corporate discounts for health club memberships.
15. Place physical fitness bulletin boards in strategic areas.
16. Advertise an exercise equipment swap.
17. Purchase fitness CDs and DVDs that employees may borrow.
18. Invite consultants from retail shoe stores or shoe manufacturers to be on-site for a day.
19. Promote a bike helmet fitting day.
20. Provide bicycle racks or a fenced-in area for bicyclists in a well-lit section of the property.

NUTRITION

21. Ask your vending machine company to add healthy foods.
22. Use vending machine commissions to help fund wellness programs.

23. Work with your vending machine company and cafeteria to post calories and nutrient contents and amounts on vending machines, lunchroom tables, etc.
24. Place incentive stickers on low-fat items in vending machines and on healthy choice selections in the cafeteria.
25. Develop a cookbook of employees' low-fat recipes, exchange recipes and feature healthy employee recipes periodically on the cafeteria menu.
26. Hold recipe contests.
27. Celebrate "Free Fruit Day" and give away apples.
28. Have a homegrown fruit and vegetable exchange.
29. Request that cafeteria vendors serve low-fat, low-cholesterol, nutritious foods.
30. Encourage "Fruit and Vegetable Day" in the cafeteria.
31. Identify one heart-healthy snack idea daily in the cafeteria.
32. Request that cafeteria foods be made from 1 percent milk instead of whole.
33. Hold low-fat cooking demonstrations.
34. Suggest that employees keep a list of healthy, low-fat snacks in their cars to use when shopping. Encourage employees to bring yogurt, fruits and fat-free condiments to work.
35. Plan company functions with heart-healthy eating choices in mind.
36. Conduct a support group for weight management. Sponsor company weight reduction programs.
37. Offer information on packing healthy brown bag lunches.
38. Hold an employee luncheon — bring a healthy lunch to pass and share the recipe.
39. Encourage employees to bring crock pots of heart-healthy soup and share with others.
40. Promote an "Eat Your Greens" campaign on St. Patrick's Day.
41. Share mocktail (non-alcoholic beverage) recipes.
42. Offer a kitchen area accessible to all employees.
43. Offer reasonable prices for healthy snacks (i.e., fresh fruit or yogurt), meals and salad bars.
44. Place myplate.gov charts in break room and cafeteria areas.
45. Have office water coolers readily available.
46. Have employees keep track of their grocery list for two weeks and offer prizes for those who consistently buy healthy food options.
47. Offer nutrition-related movies, books and brochures that can be borrowed and exchanged among employees.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

(Exercise and good nutrition are great stress-busters.)

48. Offer chair massages at health fairs.
49. Take stress relief breaks (i.e., meditation, walking or just closing the office door). Encourage employees to take time for themselves.
50. Suggest that employees volunteer to take a pet from a shelter for a walk.

51. Encourage laughter to reduce stress at the worksite.
52. Provide employees with relaxation music.
53. E-mail computer break tips.
54. Address emotional and spiritual concerns with self-help books that can be borrowed or exchanged.
55. Get involved with community volunteer activities.
56. Encourage employees to mentor a child.
57. Encourage staff to take meal breaks.
58. Send out daily quotes with encouraging messages and have employees share their favorites to use in the following days.
59. Encourage self-confidence and positive outlooks.
60. Promote a “Call-a-Friend” campaign. Provide social support.
61. Hold a secret pal drawing. During the month, each employee is encouraged to do nice things for his or her secret pal (i.e., e-mail messages a secret message left on a chair or special gifts, such as fat-free candy or homegrown flowers).

TOBACCO

62. Promote smoke-free buildings and meeting rooms.
63. Provide health information focused on monthly or seasonal events (i.e., the Great American Smokeout).
64. Provide on-site smoking cessation programs.
65. Reimburse employees for enrolling in smoking cessation programs.
66. Provide a tobacco savings calculator tool and have employees see what they could do with money they spend on tobacco each year.
67. Give small gift cards to those who agree to not smoke and avoid alcohol.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

68. Provide incentives, such as T-shirts, caps or aprons. Arrange paid time off.
69. Hold contests: “Wellness Project of the Month” or “Set Your Goal” competition, employee/management and interdepartmental challenges, health trivia game with prizes, and other fun worksite competitions.
70. Set up displays in the reception area or lobby. Display health posters in employees’ lunch or meeting rooms.
71. Send health related e-cards (found on free sites like the CDC website). Topics include tobacco cessation, heart health, cold and flu, and other health related topics.
72. When hosting team competitions, have the winning teams’ supervisor or manager prepare a healthy meals or snack for employees.
73. Host a lunch and learn on disaster preparedness plan for the company in emergency situations like earthquakes and security measures.

74. Provide bulletin boards for health information exchange and for people to record milestones they have achieved in health (i.e., New Year's resolution, miles walked or pounds lost).
75. Announce and publicize a monthly health theme or National Health Observance
76. Conduct recognition activities for employees making efforts at healthier lifestyles (i.e., bulletin board listings, healthy incentives or discounts to health clubs). Send employees personally-signed letters from the CEO congratulating their healthy behaviors. Promote success stories or employees of the month. Recognize the coordinator of wellness activities.
77. Kick off "lunch and learn" programs. Use videos and guest speakers on various health topics at lunchtime. Urge employees to bring a healthy brown bag lunch.
78. Include children of employees in a drawing contest with health as the theme.
79. Provide child care so that parents can participate in wellness activities.
80. Have a company health practitioner set a time (weekly or monthly) to check blood pressure, body fat and weight.
81. Provide flu shots at the worksite or make schedules of community clinics available.
82. Provide one-on-one counseling for high-risk employees and people with disabilities by establishing wellness mentoring programs.
83. Develop a brainstorming team for ideas and to help with wellness activities.
84. Conduct a survey to assess what topics employees want to pursue.
85. At meetings:
 - Start with a stretch and take a relaxation break in the middle.
 - Conduct a wellness activity.
 - Recognize an employee birthday or other special event.
 - Vary meeting formats. Include prizes for good ideas.
 - Allow staff members to occasionally lead a meeting.
86. Provide information on back care (i.e., the correct way to lift, stretch and exercise for strength).
87. Partner with other local organizations to sponsor an event. Share expenses and resources. Network with other businesses for discounts at health clubs.
88. Obtain company discounts.
89. Rotate departmental responsibility and ask interns to assist with wellness projects and events.
90. Gain senior management support by showing a good example.
91. Create a wellness newsletter. Highlight healthy lifestyle success stories.
92. Conduct employee health fairs with wellness giveaways (i.e., gift certificates to a farmers market or fruit stand).
93. Provide health information (such as fact sheets) for employees to take home. Distribute safety information before long holiday weekends.

94. Conduct a retirement seminar focusing on wellness for retirement.
95. Conduct a “Wash Your Hands” campaign.
96. Include health information with paychecks (payroll stuffers).
97. Publish weekly health tips via internal e-mail.
98. Attend classes on positive management styles.
99. Change and clean filters on air conditioners more frequently.
100. Track illness in a department and alert employees by providing precaution and prevention tips.
101. Offer a casual day the last Friday of each month for employees who donated or volunteered to a local charity during the month.