

February 2009

Workplace Wellness

Why Should We Care?

Wellness programs have been around for years. They seem to be the right thing to do. However, just like our New Year's resolutions; many businesses doubt we have what it takes to make the program stick.

Obesity levels have reached a record level high! According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 65% American adults are overweight or obese and nearly 34% are obese. If the past has taught us anything, ignoring the problem is not the solution.

For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). BMI is used because, for most people, it correlates with their amount of body fat.

An adult who has a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight.
An adult who has a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese.

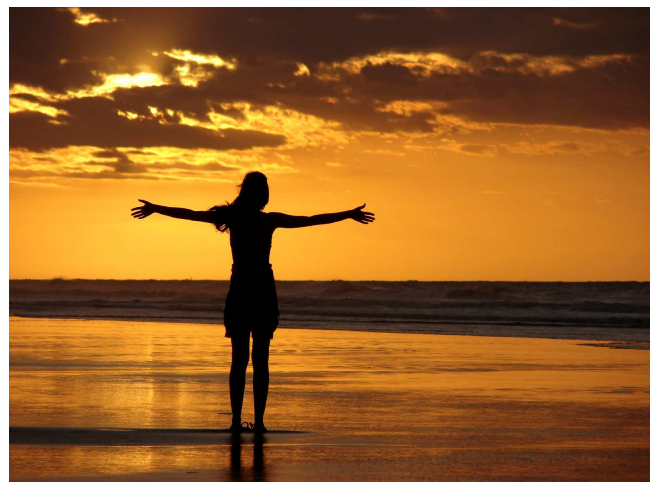
Go the following site to learn more or to calculate your BMI

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/index.html>



407-949-7251

www.hrc-partners.com



Obesity has physical, psychological, social and financial consequences. According to the CDC here are some medical consequences of obesity:

- Coronary heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancers (endometrial, breast, prostate and colon)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Dyslipidemia (for example, high total cholesterol or high levels of triglycerides)
- Stroke
- Liver and Gallbladder disease
- Sleep apnea and respiratory problems
- Osteoarthritis (a degeneration of cartilage and its underlying bone within a joint)
- Gynecological problems (abnormal menses, infertility)

Direct medical costs may include preventive, diagnostic, and treatment services related to obesity. Indirect costs relate to decreased productivity, restricted activity, and absenteeism.

Healthcare premiums continue to rise in double digits year after year and businesses are sharing the costs with their employees in order to keep their budgets balanced. The underlying truth is that our poor health habits are largely to blame for the increases.



407-949-7251

www.hrc-partners.com

Poor health habits take an enormous toll on Businesses:

- It costs employers an average of \$1,300 per year for an employee who smokes.
- Studies show that obese workers are absent approximately 1-3 extra days per person, per year compared with normal weight counterparts; conversely, substantial weight loss in obese subjects can result in reduced sick leave.
- According to the CDC lower back pain costs employers about \$20 billion annually.¹
- The National Safety Council estimates that 1 million employees are absent on an average workday because of stress-related problems; costing \$200 billion annually.
- Illicit drug and alcohol abuse costs our nation \$120 billion dollars a year according to the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration. They also report that annually 8.2% of full time workers aged 18-64 used illicit drugs in a given month and 8.8% consumed alcohol heavily in 60 days.
- According to the CDC work injuries cost employers \$121 billion in medical care, lost productivity and wages.¹

There is good news. Implemented appropriately, a wellness program can produce strong benefits for both employees and employers. Furthermore, these benefits can be measured through a return on investment (ROI). One study from the *American Journal of Health Promotion* that included analyses of plans from more than 200 employers showed an average medical cost ROI of \$3.48. In order to reap all the benefits, the program must be well designed and well managed.



407-949-7251

www.hrc-partners.com

Wondering how you can "Sell" the program?

Make a specific case for your workplace by gathering crucial numbers from your files on claims data and time off taken.

These figures will also be your baseline for your operating plan.

Here are some examples:

This year's health insurance costs:

Workers' compensation costs:

Number of short-term disability claims:

Number of long-term disability claims:

Number of sick days used:

Number of light-duty hours used:

Hospitalizations for coronary conditions:

Blood pressure medication:

Cholesterol medication:

Diabetes supplies:

Ask your health insurance company or broker for the following information:

What ___ % of employees account for ___% of our healthcare expenditures.

With your figures in hand you will be ready to make your presentation to management demonstrating the ROI for the program and elicit their support for the Wellness Team.



407-949-7251

www.hrc-partners.com

There are several steps you can take on the wellness journey.

Draft a Wellness Plan

1. Create a Wellness Champion among Senior Management
2. Assess the Current Level of Wellness at Your Workplace
3. Create a Customized Operating Plan
4. Launch Your Wellness Program
5. Communicate, Educate, Motivate and Empower
6. Measure, Assess and Adjust

Tips for Success include:

- Get buy-in from management not only for the budget but also to lead events and approving employee's time at wellness fairs etc. (time, money and resources)
- Gauging interest and using employee surveys and focus groups to determine what types of wellness programs employees are interested in. For example, if you implement a diabetes awareness program but you have an empty-house at the lunch and learn the program will get off to a bad start.
- Create a Health Work Environment to foster the initiative; offer water coolers and healthy snacks in vending machines, ensure that stairways and walkways are safe and inviting for walking, offer stress management and healthy cooking lunch and learn seminars, encourage a ten-minute break to stretch their legs
- Keep it simple – stay away from time consuming programs, make it convenient.
- Communicate your mission statement and ensure your objectives are SMART

Set a Timeline

1. Wellness implementation team assembles several months before the launch.
2. Wellness team meets twice a month to plan initiatives.
3. Begin promotion 6 weeks before the launch.
4. Wellness team meets weekly before and after the launch to finalize plans and review successes and future changes.



There are many options to focus on! There is no time like today to get the office ready...

The National Wellness Institute defines wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and more choices toward, a more successful existence.”

According to the CDC, only 30 percent of adults participate in regular “leisure-time” activities, 40 percent in no regular activity, and 30 percent in “some leisure-time activity”.

Participate in Walking Day on Wednesday, April 8, 2009.

Support the fight against heart disease by participating in National Start! This is the day that adults nationwide can make the pledge to Start! walking and to become active and heart healthy, especially in the workplace. Go to the site to learn all about it <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3053117>

You can also introduce a Healthy Lifestyle Campaign

One source of information from healthy eating to tips for parents is the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/index.html>

Launch a Health Fair

Here are some of the popular topics:

Arthritis Education <http://www.arthritis.org>

Back Health – partner with a local chiropractor

CPR and First Aid – partner with local EMS

Safe Driving – partner with local police

Smoking Cessation <http://www.smokefree.gov>

Healthy heart <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000>

Diabetes Awareness <http://www.diabetes.org/home.jsp>

Interested in learning more about starting your wellness campaign and would like assistance, contact Makela at HRC-Partners. We would be happy to help you launch your campaign and reach your goals!

