

Work Site Disease or Wellness?



By: Amy Wyant, Minnesota State Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Work Site Wellness Coordinator, Itasca County

You are invited to learn about a progressive opportunity for your business provided by the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). The primary goal of SHIP is to help Minnesotans live longer, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic disease.

Workplace Wellness is one of the focus areas of SHIP in Itasca County. Several businesses will be selected to participate. One of the many benefits of this program is that SHIP is providing the funding for the workplace wellness consultants.

If a workplace wellness program is of interest to your business, please join us on Thursday, December 9th @ noon at the YMCA conference room for **“Working Towards Wellness...Is it Right for Your Business?”** This meeting is open to businesses in the area with 25+ employees. There will be a 10-15 minute presentation on workplace wellness and the program.

Please RSVP by emailing aitkin.wellness.amy.wyant@gmail.com and if you are unable to attend this meeting but are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please call 218-927-7462.

Obesity and the health conditions associated with it; such as, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, stroke, coronary heart disease, and certain types of cancer are responsible for much of the increase in health care spending by employers.⁴ Obese persons spend 77% more money for necessary medications than non-obese persons.⁴ Obesity affects more than health care costs, it also has a significant impact on worker productivity because the more chronic medical conditions an employee has, the higher the probability of absenteeism or presenteeism.⁵

Organizations can benefit directly by improving employee health through an obesity prevention program. A survey of CEOs found that "healthier employees" is the number one reason why companies choose to implement health promotion programs.⁶ Additionally, well-designed programs have the potential to extend beyond the worksite and positively influence dependents (spouses and children), and thereby reduce an organization's health care costs.

Why Should Employers Get Involved?

Potential benefits to employers:

- Reduces cost for chronic diseases.
- Decreases absenteeism.
- Reduces employee turnover.
- Improves worker satisfaction.
- Demonstrates concern for your employees.

- Improves morale.

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Potential benefits to your employees

- Ensures greater productivity.
- Reduces absenteeism.
- Improves fitness and health.
- Provides social opportunity and source of support within the workplace.

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Return on investment (ROI) analysis is a form of cost-benefit analysis that measures the cost of an intervention compared to the expected financial return of the intervention.^{7,8}

Obesity is linked to many co-morbid conditions resulting in increased health care costs. With high obesity rates in the United States, these health care costs can directly affect employer profits.⁴ It is estimated that employers spend \$13 billion annually on the total cost of obesity.³ Approximately 9.1% of all health care costs in the United States are related to obesity and overweight.⁹

Workplace obesity prevention and control programs can be an effective way for employers to reduce obesity.¹⁰ They can produce a direct financial return on investment (ROI) by lowering health care costs, lowering absenteeism, and increasing employee productivity.¹¹

Employers can also see other indirect benefits when they implement obesity prevention programs,¹² including increased employee morale, worker retention and improve the organization's ability to recruit new employees in a competitive market.¹³ Further, if obesity prevention programs include employee dependents, they have the potential to positively influence dependents (spouses and children) and thereby reduce an organization's health care costs.

To obtain a list of sources cited for this article, contact Amy M. Wyant, SHIP Work Site Wellness Coordinator.