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Workplace Wellness Guide

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Welcome to Workplace Wellness

Your employees are your number one asset, and you know that it makes good business sense to invest in their health. The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is especially true today, as rates of chronic disease continue to increase, and health-care costs rise as a result. The most prevalent chronic diseases are also the most preventable because individual health habits are a strong factor.

However, most people do not realize their behavior today can lead to chronic illness tomorrow. By promoting wellness, you greatly increase the chances that your employees will adopt and sustain healthier behaviors over the long term.

Ideally, workplace wellness begins with an assessment to determine your employees’ risk factors. It continues with education and activities targeted specifically toward those risk factors. Research shows the most effective areas to target for improving health are:

- physical activity
- nutrition
- stress management and emotional well-being.

Premera’s health and productivity team compiled this guide to help you promote wellness in your organization. We offer innovative ideas, tools to share with your employees, and activities to adopt and deliver in the workplace.

■ Why Worry About Wellness in the Workplace?

With any investment, it’s important to look for the return. Employers who institute ongoing, successful workplace wellness campaigns see return in the form of healthier, happier employees. This translates into:

- fewer sick days
- higher productivity
- lower health-care costs.

The average employee spends more hours working each day than on any other activity—including sleep. That’s nine hours per day for the typical employee who encounters daily health choices in the workplace: what to eat, whether to take the elevator or stairs, how to lift heavy objects or sit at a computer properly. During a wellness campaign, co-workers may influence each other’s behavior as they compare notes, compete for wellness prizes, eat together and exercise together.



■ What Does Workplace Wellness Look Like?

Offering yearly flu shots and sponsoring walk-a-thons are two of the more common workplace wellness strategies. To really see a difference in your employees, you should work toward building a culture of health and wellness in your organization. Depending on your readiness level, begin working on your culture of wellness by focusing on one or more of the following:

Awareness

Boost your employees' knowledge of better health through high-profile, ongoing education campaigns and onsite health screenings.

Interactive Tools

Provide interactive tools to employees that give them the power to assess and monitor their progress toward better health.

Workplace Events

Sponsor events, workshops and programs that motivate employees to exercise more, eat better and manage stress.

Workplace Eating

Make it your policy to offer healthy food options in the cafeteria, in vending machines and at meetings and sponsored events.

Workplace Environment

Make changes in the workplace environment that encourage employees to exercise, such as promoting stairwell use or installing bike racks.

This guide is organized according to the above types of initiatives so you can find the resource that best fits your needs.

■ What If Employees Don't Buy It?

Just remember that a culture of health and wellness isn't created overnight. You may not win all of your employees over to wellness, but even reaching a few will make a difference. And by promoting wellness, you're seeding the idea of better health in the minds of your employees. Even in a high-turnover industry, one organization committed to wellness can have a positive cumulative effect on the industry as a whole.

Think about it this way: Your employees may not even realize they need to change their lifestyles—until they see positive health messages in the workplace introducing and reinforcing the change.

How Ready Are You?

To determine your organization's readiness level, consider the following sets of questions:

■ Value

Does your organization place a high value on wellness? Do your leaders clearly demonstrate a commitment to wellness, and do all employees understand its importance, or is wellness a fairly new concept for you?

■ Communication

Is wellness as a message consistently promoted and woven throughout all internal communications, or is it limited to sending out the occasional e-mail messages or distributing flyers or posters about wellness? Is wellness something you have not yet communicated to employees?

■ Events

Do you offer employees ongoing wellness events to promote physical activity, better nutrition and stress management strategies? Do you try to offer at least one wellness event per year, or is this the first time you've considered offering an organized wellness event?

■ Policies and Procedures

Have you considered adopting a smoke-free workplace policy? Have you established guidelines for serving healthy food options in the workplace? Do you allow employees flex-time opportunities that would better enable them to fit exercise into their daily schedules?

■ Environment

Are your stairwells accessible, appealing and safe? Have you considered installing any of the following: bike racks, water coolers, a quiet room for employees to take a stress break or mileage markers to measure walking progress?

If thinking about wellness in the workplace is new to your organization, you probably want to begin with awareness campaigns and tools for your employees before launching into workplace events or making changes to the workplace environment. However, some policy changes—such as banning smoking from the workplace—may be a “no-brainer” for you.

You can also use the information provided through your Health Risk Management program or other sources to identify which topic areas are most important to improve your employees' health. Your Health Promotion Administrator can help you tailor the resources in this guide to fit your workplace.



Awareness

Many people do not fully realize that what they eat, what they do or don't do, and how they cope with stress on a daily basis strongly affect their long-term health. Chronic diseases—heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and others—are among the most preventable conditions, yet they account for 50% of national health-care costs. Behavioral choices are at the root of most chronic illnesses, with tobacco use topping the list, followed by a lack of physical activity and poor nutrition.

Everyday reminders to opt for a healthier lifestyle can make a difference—even if results take time. You can boost awareness of better health through high-profile, ongoing education campaigns.

■ Leverage Your Benefits Plan

It's in your best interest to make sure your employees know about existing benefits and resources covered by their plan. For example, many plans include a tobacco cessation benefit. Employees may not realize when tests for cholesterol level and early cancer detection are covered by their plan or whether a fitness benefit is available. For many, acknowledging emotional issues can be difficult. Employees may be unaware of Employee Assistance Program resources and reluctant to inquire about available services.

■ Awareness Resources

Premera: Know Your Numbers

www.premeranumbers.com

Premera's "Know Your Numbers" campaign addresses physical activity, nutrition and stress management under a common theme: the importance of knowing the numbers that gauge your health status, such as body mass index, cholesterol level, blood pressure, and blood sugar (glucose) level. Free to all Premera employer groups, the campaign kits require only a computer, printer and someone to distribute materials throughout the workplace. **(Free)**



know your numbers



Helpguide.org

www.helpguide.org

An excellent resource for stress management tips, Helpguide.org offers more than 170 commercial-free articles on topics such as ADHD, healthy relationships, senior housing and care, and stress & trauma. **(Free)**

Mental Health America

www.nmha.org

This is a multifaceted site that contains a variety of helpful, on-the-spot information, including policy alerts and instructions for finding a local therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or counselor. In addition, there is access to a crisis hotline, information for a variety of age groups, a link to NHMA's newsletter and resources for the workplace designed exclusively for employers, including some resources in Spanish. **(Free)**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's National Mental Health Information Center—Center for Mental Health Services

www.mentalhealth.org

This site provides general mental health information for those interested in clinical resources. We recommend searching for "depression" in order to retrieve depression-related articles and information. **(Free)**

American Diabetes Association

www.diabetes.org/communityprograms-and-localevents/waw-default.jsp

The ADA offers a wide range of materials to raise awareness of diabetes—a preventable chronic illness—and to promote healthy lifestyle choices. **(Free, \$)**

Health Enhancement Systems: Welcome to Colorful Choices

www.hesonline.com

This guidebook—available for purchase—provides individualized instruction for how to make better nutritional choices based on the vibrant colors of fruits and vegetables. **(\$)**

Health Enhancement Systems: wellStage Lifestyle Brochures

www.hesonline.com

This suite of brochures provides information, exercises and activities on these topics: Stress Management, Tobacco Free, Healthy Diet, Healthy Body Weight and Physical Activity. Employers may purchase by topic area or in packages, and have the option of ordering a wall-mounted display rack. **(\$)**



■ Awareness Suggestions

- Look for an awareness campaign kit that includes a variety of communication tools: posters, flyers, e-mail and voice mail scripts, table tents and mailers.
- Secure management buy-in, and have e-mail and voicemail messages come from a top executive in your organization; the more personalized, the better.
- Check with your local hospital or university for available speakers for brown bag lunch discussions.
- Tie your awareness campaign to films, shows or events in pop culture, such as “The Amazing Race.”
- Save money and increase impact by drawing on well-publicized, national campaigns.

■ National Health Campaigns

National campaigns have high-impact value because the messages your employees see in the workplace are reinforced elsewhere, such as on TV and in the doctor’s office. Government agencies and non-profit organizations often provide free or low-cost campaign resources and materials. You can tie these to a particular topic focus, for example:

- Launch Premera’s “Know Your Numbers” Campaign in February, reminding employees to get their blood pressure and cholesterol level checked during American Heart Month.
- Kick off a walking campaign tied to Walk America in April.
- Announce your new cafeteria menu in March, National Nutrition Month, or in September, Fruit and Vegetable Month.
- Unveil your new bike racks in June to coincide with National Bike Month.
- Remind employees to quit smoking during the Great American Smokeout in November.

There are a wide variety of national campaigns and themes. See the following page for a helpful starter list.



■ National Health Campaign Starter List

January	National Birth Defects Prevention Month	www.marchofdimes.com
	National Glaucoma Awareness Month	www.preventblindness.org
February	American Heart Month	www.americanheart.org
	National Wear Red Day	www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth
	National Eating Disorders Awareness Week	www.nationaleatingdisorders.org
March	National Nutrition Month	www.eatright.org
	National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month	www.preventcancer.org/colorectal
	National Sleep Awareness Week	www.sleepfoundation.org
	National Diabetes Alert Day	www.diabetes.org/communityprograms-and-localevents/americanidiabetesalert.jsp
April	Alcohol Awareness Month	ncadi.samhsa.gov
	Counseling Awareness Month	www.counseling.org
	National Alcohol Screening Day	www.mentalhealthscreening.org/events/nasd
	Walk America	www.walkamerica.org
	National SAFE KIDS Week	www.safekids.org
May	American Stroke Month	www.americanheart.org
	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month	www.fitness.gov
	National Bike Month	www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth
	Mental Health Month	www.nmha.org
	National Anxiety Disorders Screening Day	www.freedomfromfear.org
	Bike to Work Week	www.bikeleague.org
	National Employee Health and Fitness Day	www.physicalfitness.org
June	Fireworks Safety Month	www.preventblindness.org
	National Headache Awareness Week	www.headaches.org
	Sun Safety Week	www.sunsafetyalliance.org
	Eye Safety Awareness Week	www.useironline.org
July	Fireworks Safety Month	www.preventblindness.org
	Eye Safety Awareness Week	www.useironline.org
	UV Safety Month	www.aao.org
August	National Immunization Awareness Month	www.cdc.gov/vaccines
	Children's Eye Health and Safety Month	www.preventblindness.org
	World Breastfeeding Week	www.Illi.org
September	America On the Move	www.americaonthemove.org
	Fruit and Vegetable Month	www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov
	National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month	www.recoverymonth.gov
	National Cholesterol Education month	hp2010.nhlbihin.net/cholmonth
	Whole Grains Month	www.wholegrainscouncil.org/get-involved/celebrate-whole-grains-month-in-september
	National Suicide Prevention Week	www.suicidology.org
October	Drive Safely Work Week	www.trafficsafety.org
	Healthy Lung Month	www.lungusa.org
	National Breast Cancer Awareness Month	www.nbcam.org
	National Dental Hygiene Month	www.adha.org
	"Talk About Prescriptions" Month	www.talkaboutrx.org
	National Health Education Week	www.nche.org
	National Mammography Day	www.cancer.org
November	American Diabetes Month	www.diabetes.org
	Lung Cancer Awareness Month	www.lungcanceralliance.org
	National Family Caregivers Month	www.thefamilycaregiver.org
	Great American Smokeout	www.cancer.org
	National Influenza Vaccination Week	www.cdc.gov/flu
December	Safe Toys and Gifts Month	www.preventblindness.org
	National Handwashing Awareness Week	www.henrythehand.com



■ Awareness Resource Chart

Use the chart below to find the awareness campaign that addresses the health topic of concern for your employees.

	Physical Activity	Nutrition	Stress/Emotional Well-being
Helpguide.org			✓
National Mental Health Association			✓
Premera Know Your Numbers	✓	✓	✓
Mentalhealth.org			✓
Diabetes in the Workplace	✓	✓	
Welcome to Colorful Choices		✓	
wellStage Lifestyle Brochures	✓	✓	✓

Interactive Resources

By providing employees with interactive, online tools, you give them the power to assess and monitor their own health. This encourages them to play a more active, accountable role in their health care and lifestyle choices.

Timely, credible wellness information can help your employees make the right decisions about their health. That's why Premera's Health Risk Management program partnered with WebMD to deliver interactive tools that can be customized to individual employees. But even if you're not ready to participate in the highly customizable Health Risk Management program, you can make your employees aware of basic tools available to them.

■ Interactive Tool Resources

Everyday Choices

www.everydaychoices.org

This program is sponsored by a coalition between the American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association and the American Heart Association. It offers a wide variety of health tools, from nutrition and physical activity quizzes to a list of CPR classes. **(Free)**



MedlinePlus

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials

This collection of interactive health tutorials is sponsored by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. It addresses four broad topics: Diseases and Conditions, Tests and Diagnostic Procedures, Surgery and Treatment Procedures, and Prevention and Wellness. The topics under Prevention and Wellness include back exercises and tips for managing stress. **(Free)**

MyPyramid.gov

www.mypyramid.gov

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this interactive Web site includes MyPyramid Tracker, an individual assessment of nutrition and physical activity. “Inside MyPyramid” gives advice on choosing the right foods and balancing exercise and eating. MyPyramid for Kids includes games and fun activities to promote good childhood eating habits and exercise. **(Free)**

National Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, All Stars at Work: Online Tool Kit on Depression

www.workplacementalhealth.org/employee_resources/all_stars.aspx

This site—featuring Terry Bradshaw—contains tool kits for employers and employees about depression. For employees, All Stars at Work features Terry Bradshaw and Terry’s Tips for seeking treatment and being an active participant in treatment for employees. Also included are case examples from leading employers, a depression calculator and pertinent articles. **(Free)**

WebMD

www.webmd.com

Get health advice for everyone in the family. WebMD is regularly reviewed by a panel of health experts to provide you with timely, helpful information. Health Risk Management participants receive expanded access to the site. **(Free)**

■ Interactive Tool Resource Chart

Use the chart below to find the workplace resource that addresses the health topic of concern for your employees.

	Physical Activity	Nutrition	Stress/Emotional Well-being
Everyday Choices	✓	✓	
Medline Plus	✓	✓	✓
MyPyramid.gov	✓	✓	
All Stars at Work			✓
WebMD	✓	✓	✓



■ Interactive Tool E-mail Template

Use this sample e-mail message as a template for sharing the Web site addresses on the preceding page with your employees.

Subject: A Tool for Better Health

From: Your Name Here
Date: Today's Date
To: All Staff
Cc: HR, Wellness Team

Your health and well-being are important to us, and we want to share something with you that can help. With all the conflicting health information in the media these days, it can be hard to figure out what's best for your health. One terrific resource is just a mouse-click away:

www.mypyramid.gov

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this interactive Web site includes MyPyramid Tracker, an individual assessment of nutrition and physical activity. "Inside MyPyramid" gives advice on choosing the right foods and balancing exercise and eating.

There's no cost to use this site—you've already paid for it through your tax dollars. There's even a MyPyramid for Kids, which includes games and fun activities to promote good childhood eating habits and exercise.

We hope you'll use this site to make healthy lifestyle decisions—for yourself and your family.



Workplace Events

Modern living does not always support healthy lifestyles. Office workers spend hours at a stretch in front of computers, and even physical laborers are more prone to repetitive tasks rather than the well-rounded exercise recommended by health experts. Often, our leisure time lacks a physical component—the nation’s leading leisure activity is watching TV.

According to the American Cancer Society, offering a workplace physical activity program is a best practice for improving employee health. Encouraging employees to use their breaks for walking is an easy and cost-effective way to see change, and when done as an organization-wide event, walking in the workplace can have a dramatic impact. Furthermore, walking clubs and physical activity events build working relationships and a sense of teamwork among employees.

■ Workplace Event Resources

American Cancer Society: Active for Life

www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/activeforlifeonline.asp

This interactive online program developed by the American Cancer Society is designed to encourage greater physical activity. Participants work individually or in teams to achieve physical fitness goals, receiving points for each time they are active. **(Free)**

America On the Move

aom.americaonthemove.org

America On the Move Foundation provides a Worksite Coordinator Toolkit that includes a well-defined plan with easy-to-follow implementation steps, online communication materials, e-mail messages, flyers, a PowerPoint presentation and handouts, as well as tools to gauge success, recognize and reward participant efforts, and generate reports. **(Free)**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/other_general.htm

The CDC provides access to numerous health promotion toolkits based on employee population and needs. Look here for both CDC-sponsored toolkits as well as those offered by other organizations. **(\$; Free)**

Wellness Councils of America: Step by Step Program

www.welcoa.org

Complete instructions for a 10,000 steps a day workplace campaign are available online in a printer-ready guide from this national association. **(Free)**

Health Enhancement Systems: 10K a Day Program, Walktober, Spring into Action

www.hesonline.com

HES offers a variety of programs to promote workplace-supported walking. For purchase of each package, HES provides a coordinator guide and high-quality, camera-ready materials—a registration form, handbill, log form, newsletter articles, and games, as well as samples of incentive items, such as a T-shirt, fold-up flying disc and an inspirational book. **(\$)**

Case Study: Walking and Weight Loss Campaign

A county transit organization participating in Premera's Health Risk Management program found that many of its employees were at risk for developing cardiovascular disease. Nearly half of all employees had a body mass index greater than 30, considered an indicator of obesity. The organization's Wellness Committee stepped up its campaign to promote walking as a form of exercise, with excellent results. The program encourages employees to walk regularly and measures results through weight loss. The agency offered employees cash incentives for walking 20 minutes each day for five days a week. Within a year, the county transit organization reported 60 employees lost a combined total of 626 pounds, with nine employees losing 10% or more of their starting weights.

■ Workplace Event Suggestions

- Form a Wellness Committee to handle event coordination and promotion.
- Sponsor an event that targets risk factors specific to your employees.
- Offer meaningful incentives to motivate employees to participate.
- Secure strong, visible support from executive management/senior leadership.
- If necessary, adopt policies or make changes in the workplace to support the event.
- Frame the event in a positive, non-judgmental way to encourage participation by everyone, from jocks to couch potatoes.

■ Workplace Event Resource Chart

Use the chart below to find the workplace event that addresses the health topic of most interest and value for your employees.

	Physical Activity	Nutrition	Stress/Emotional Well-being
Active for Life	✓		
CDC Toolkits	✓	✓	✓
WELCOA Step by Step	✓		
10K a Day, Walktober, Spring into Action	✓		

Creating a Workplace Powered by Healthy Foods

Employees spend at least half their waking hours in the workplace and eat one, two, sometimes three meals a day there. Plus, because employees often eat together as a social activity, they influence each other's dietary choices and habits, which can have long-term effects. According to the World Health Organization, better workplace nutrition can raise productivity levels by as much as 20%.

You can promote a culture of health by providing nutritious and affordable food choices in your workplace. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Stock vending machines with nutritious, energy-promoting snacks.
- Work with your cafeteria manager to create menus emphasizing fruits, vegetables, and non-fried foods.
- Make sure that your fresh and healthy options are just as affordable as a burger and fries.
- When faced with tight deadlines, emphasize self-care and continuing to eat well.
- For birthdays and other workplace celebrations, encourage healthy alternatives to cakes, donuts, cookies, and other low-nutrient foods.

■ Workplace Eating Resources

American Cancer Society: Meeting Well

www.acsworkplacesolutions.com/meetingwell.asp

This guidebook provides advice and helpful tips for planning healthy worksite meetings of any size, from 10 to 10,000 attendees. **(Free)**





Energize Your Meetings

www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/pdf_files/Energize-Your-Meetings.pdf

The Washington Department of Health offers guidelines for how to incorporate healthy foods and physical activity into meetings to help participants stay focused and energized. **(Free)**

Garden Market

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/gardenmarket/index.htm

The Centers for Disease Control developed this toolkit on workplace nutrition as part of its Healthier Worksite Initiative. It provides ideas for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption at work. **(Free)**

Strategic Alliance ENACT

www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/enact/workplace/nutrition_4a.php

The Prevention Institute provides easy access to numerous workplace nutrition sources, from successful case studies to a vending machine tool kit. **(Free)**

Weight Watchers

www.weightwatchers.com

Weight Watchers staff can work with you to provide customized weight-loss solutions for your employees. **(\$)**

Workplace Eating Suggestions

- Encourage employees to bring fruits and vegetables from their home gardens to share with each other.
- Host healthy recipe potlucks to promote better nutrition and build camaraderie among employees. Ask participants to bring in their favorite healthy dish along with the recipe printed on cards to share.
- Partner with a local produce merchant or farmer's market to offer fruits and vegetables at the workplace.
- Consider trading out potato chips for banana chips or offering strawberries or other healthy treats alongside traditional celebration foods.

Workplace Environment

Environmental features and changes to existing policies and procedures can help foster healthy behavior change. Policy changes are wide-spread and effective. Investments in workplace facilities or equipment are worthwhile for employers who see the dramatic cultural change that comes from making such a highly visible commitment to workplace wellness.

Creating an environment for wellness would include one or more of the following:

- forming workplace walking groups
- partnering with health and fitness clubs for employee discounts
- adding paint or artwork to stairwells to make them more inviting
- requiring company vehicles to be smoke-free
- adopting a smoke-free workplace policy
- establishing flex-time opportunities
- adding bike racks or onsite workout facilities
- installing showers or changing rooms.

■ Workplace Environment Resources

Premera Extras!

www.premera.com

Through our Extras! program, your employees can save 10% to 60% off membership dues for fitness clubs and weight management programs.

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

A model smoke-free workplace policy and other helpful implementation tools are available on the ACS Web site. **(Free)**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Healthier Worksite Initiative

The CDC provides several tool kits and suggestions for wellness in the workplace environment:

- Discount Fitness Club Network

www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/fitnessclub/index.htm

For employers with multi-site workplaces, this tool kit instructs employers in identifying and forming a relationship with a nationwide health and fitness club. **(Free)**





- StairWELL to Better Health
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/stairwell
Learn how to turn stairwells into inviting locations for physical activity. **(Free)**
- Tobacco free workplace
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/tobacco
Implement a tobacco-free workplace policy using this toolkit. **(Free)**
- Walkability
www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/toolkits/walkability
Test whether or not your organization is walk-friendly using this online audit. **(Free)**

■ Workplace Environment Suggestions

- You don't need to take on a major capital expenditure in order to provide an environment conducive to wellness. Try simple policy changes or low-cost solutions—such as updating a stairwell with paint and artwork.
- Partner with a health and fitness club nearby the workplace for easier access, and offer employees a discounted membership.
- Even a minimal investment can pay huge dividends in the long run.



