

Worksite Health Promotion

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"The bottom line is that there is a lot more that could and should be done to help people with nutrition and exercise."

- Parris Glendening, former Governor of Maryland

Nutrition Economics for Employers

It is often said that you are what you eat. Simply put: the foods we eat directly affect our bodies, and our health. It is this understanding that has significant implications for employers, particularly those interested in reducing health care costs.

The Cost of Poor Nutrition

With only 1 in 4 adults in Georgia consuming the daily recommended 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, there is serious cause for concern. Poor nutrition is a health behavior that contributes to the increasing number of obese adults and children. Obesity in turn puts one at increased risk for developing a number of chronic diseases diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers. The annual cost of obesity in Georgia is estimated at \$2.1 billion, which includes direct health care costs and indirect costs related to lost productivity, disability, and death.

Poor nutrition can also be directly linked to diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Diabetes itself is estimated to cost more than \$5.1 billion per year, including direct medical costs and lost productivity. Cardiovascular

disease amounts to about \$10.5 billion, which includes direct health care costs and indirect costs.

With so many adults spending the majority of their waking hours at work--many eating two meals during their workday--it is important to understand that the worksite is an ideal setting for promoting healthy eating. However, the 2002 Georgia Worksite Survey showed that only 10% of worksites offered healthy eating, weight management classes, or counseling for employees. In addition to nutrition education, there are some other opportunities at the worksite for encouraging and supporting employees to [Eat Healthy](#).

Nutrition Education

There are a number of ways to provide nutrition education to employees at the worksite. A key to success is to use multiple "touches." This means using different methods or avenues to provide information. Some things you can do at your worksite are:

- Share healthy recipes with employees in break rooms and cafeterias.
- Offer on-site nutrition education



classes. Consider local partners like cooperative extension services.

- Identify and direct employees to nutritional counseling resources available through your employer-sponsored health plans.
- Schedule cooking demonstrations to help employees learn how to prepare healthy meals.
- Include nutrition and other health tips on paystub messages.

Healthy Cafeteria and Vending

The cafeteria and vending machines in your worksite offer opportunities to support healthy eating. Almost three-fourths (74%) of Georgia worksites surveyed in 2002 had vending machines onsite. Changes to these environments

WELLNESS WATCH



It is no surprise that rising health care costs continue to be a major concern for employers and employees alike, particularly in the current economy. However, more employees are changing their views and actions as a way to curb the increasing cost burden. In a 2008 study, Watson Wyatt found the following: fewer employees are willing to pay higher premiums to keep deductibles and copays lower (19% vs. 38% in 2007); though only 16% enrolled in company-run wellness programs, more are trying to improve their health (66% vs. 4% in 2007); more employees are saving money by buying lower-cost drugs (35% vs. 28% in 2007); more visited the doctor only for serious conditions or symptoms (40% vs. 35% in 2007). While these behaviors reflect immediate reduction healthcare utilization, it is important to keep in mind that they may prove more costly in the long run, particularly as employees with chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease skip routine checkups and medication dosages to save money.

Food Economics

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can include:

- Replacing junk food in vending machines with healthier options like nuts, granola, dried fruit, and pretzels.
- Offering a salad bar in the cafeteria so employees can make their own salad.
- Using a color-code system to mark bad, better, best options in vending machines.
- Using stickers/decals to indicate healthier entrée options available in the cafeteria.
- Serving healthy options at meetings and company events.

Policies and Workplace Culture

When it comes to food, the prevailing culture at many worksites is for employees to bring sweets and baked pastries. The items are often brought to staff celebrations or left in common gathering areas like break rooms. Encouraging employees to eat healthy will require a change in the workplace culture so that things like fruit bowls and water are accepted

and are as commonplace as donuts and soda. Consider the following:

- Adopting a healthy vending policy and work with your snack vendor to include healthy options.
- Subsidizing the cost of nutritional counseling for employees, particularly those with nutritional-related conditions like obesity and diabetes.
- Installing water coolers or encourage employees to start a water cooler club.
- Working with a local produce vendor to provide fruits at low cost to employees.

Employers do not have to just accept the health care costs and productivity losses related to poor nutrition. Take steps to create a work environment that fosters healthy eating.

A WORD ON THE ECONOMY

The current economic environment poses a big deterrent to employers for implementing wellness programs. Those who were considering offering wellness programs to their employees may think that this is not the right time for such investments. Those who have offered activities in the past may scale back and not offer anything at all. No matter where you fall, there is no better time than now to implement effective strategies for addressing rising health care costs and for increasing the productivity of a shrinking workforce.

It is important, however, to note that an effective wellness program must be properly planned, executed and evaluated. Some things to consider:

- Identify areas of need and program components through surveys (employee interest surveys, health risk assessments (HRAs), etc) and through analysis of claims and other health cost data.
- As much as possible, link wellness program components to health benefits. Examples: use HRA results to direct high-risk employees into disease management programs health premium discounts as incentives, use tools available through your health benefits provider (online health program, wellness coaching, and other incentives).
- Identify staff (wellness coordinator, human resources, wellness committee) responsible for program planning, promotion, and encouraging employee participation.
- Identify program elements that can benefit dependents - HRAs, health coaching, etc.
- Collect data on improvements in employee health, invested resources (fiscal, human, equipment), and identify additional areas for programming.

A recent report released by Towers Perrin defined high-performing companies as those who "focus primarily on supporting and improving employee health." These companies will pay less in 2009 for health care premiums than low-performing companies, 12% on average (about \$1,200 per employee). The survey also found that high-performing companies achieve these results by: building the link between workforce health and business results; engaging employees and promoting a culture of health; investing in a broad range of existing and emerging health management programs and approaches; and rigorously measuring program and vendor performance against goals.

Health Observances



March

National Sleep Awareness Week® (March 3-9)
National Sleep Foundation
www.sleepfoundation.org

World Kidney Day (March 12)
National Kidney Foundation
www.kidney.org/news/wkd/index.cfm

Diabetes Alert Day (March 24)
American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation
www.preventcancer.org/colorectal

National Kidney Month
American Dietetic Association
www.eatright.org

National Nutrition Month®
American Dietetic Association
www.eatright.org

Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month
Prevent Blindness America
www.preventblindness.org

April

Alcohol Awareness Month
SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
ncadi.samhsa.gov

Cancer Control Month
American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

STD Awareness Month
American Social Health Association
www.ashastd.org

May

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week (May 3-9)
American Society of Safety Engineers
Canadian Society of Safety Engineering
U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration
www.asse.org/naosh

National Women's Health Week (May 10-16)
US DHHS - Office on Women's Health
www.womenshealth.gov/whw

National Employee Health & Fitness Day (May 20)
National Association for Health and Fitness
www.physicalfitness.org

American Stroke Month
American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org

Mental Health Month
Mental Health America
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

Natl High Blood Pressure Education Month
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/nhbpep_kit/

Better Sleep Month
Better Sleep Council
www.bettersleep.org



RESOURCE CORNER

OTHER GEORGIA PROGRAMS

Cooperative Extension

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension's educational programs include Family & Consumer Sciences. The Extension provides information and services related to safe food handling, buying & preparing, and nutrition & health. For more information, call 1-800-ASK-UGA1 or visit

<http://www.fcs.uga.edu/ext/food/>

For your county Extension offices, go to <http://www.caes.uga.edu/extension/statawide.cfm>

Georgia State Farmers Market

There is a network of fifteen State Farmers' Markets, offering fruits and vegetables throughout Georgia and the Southeast. These facilities maintain a viable market for Georgia farmers and farm products in the communities where they are located.

http://agr.georgia.gov/00/article/0,2086,38902732_0_40928014,00.html

RESOURCE MATERIALS

Georgia Market Maker

Georgia Market Maker is an interactive mapping system that one can use to locate farmers markets, retailers, wholesalers, and producers/farmers.

<http://ga.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>

Guidelines for Offering Healthy Foods at Meetings, Seminars & Catered Events

This resource guide from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health includes recommendations and options for company events.

http://www.ahc.umn.edu/ahc_content/colleges/sph/sph_news/Nutrition.pdf

Farmers Market Resource Guide

This guide describes farmers' market programs being implemented within Kaiser Permanente provides some lessons learned.

http://xnet.kp.org/communitybenefit/chi/tools/docs/farmers_market/KPFarmersMarketResource4.pdf

UPCOMING EVENTS

IHPM 5th Annual Health Management Conf
April 6-8, 2009 · Orlando, FL

<http://www.ihpm.org>

Chiropractic Cost Savings Opportunity & ROI April 15, 2009 · Virtual Seminar

<http://www.ahip.org/conferenceandevent/Registration.aspx?ConfId=95>

2009 American Occupational Health Conf
April 26-29, 2009 · San Diego, CA

<https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?eventid=603114>

MBGH 29th Annual Conference
May 7-8, 2009 · Chicago, IL.

<http://mbgh.org/index.php?t=eduprogram/s/annual>

Safety 2009 Conference & Exposition
June 28-July 1, 2009 · San Antonio, TX

<http://www.asse.org/education/pdc09/>

2009 SHRM Annual Conference & Exhibition
June 28-July 1, 2009, New Orleans, LA

<http://www.shrm.org/CONFERENCES/annual/>

WORKSITE WELLNESS IN THE NEWS

[Survey says work really is hazardous to your health](#) - Reuters, December 5, 2008

[When Job Disappears, So Does Health Care](#) - NY Times, December 7, 2008

[More Companies Cut Labor Costs Without Layoffs](#) - NY Times, December 22, 2008

[Rising health costs a conflict for companies, workers](#) - AJC, January 7, 2009

[COUNTY LINES|OSSINING: Caught in the Middle, Without Health Insurance](#) - NY Times, January 11, 2009

[Walgreen offers health program for businesses](#) - Reuters, January 14, 2009

[Unemployment Leaves WellPoint Unwell](#) - Reuters, January 16, 2009

[A Corporate Perk For a Stressful Time](#) - NY Times, January 18, 2009

[Health care: The hidden business killer](#) - CNN Money, January 28, 2009

[PATIENT MONEY: Making the Most of Flexible Spending Accounts](#) - NY Times, January 30, 2009

[Health Insurance: What You Need to Know](#) - NY Times, February 3, 2009

[Small Payroll, But Big Woes On Insurance](#) - NY Times, February 3, 2009

[Small businesses under pressure to cut health coverage](#) - AJC, February 3, 2009

[Losing the Glint of the Golden Years](#) - NY Times, February 8, 2009

[Working out from Nine to Five](#) - Reuters, February 9, 2009

[Kennesaw to city employees: Be healthy or pay more](#) - AJC, February 15, 2009

[US employers expect steady rise in health costs](#) - Reuter, February 19, 2009

[Is The Economy Making You Fat?](#) - Forbes, February 20, 2009

[Gov't Says 'Mass Layoffs' Soared in January](#) - BusinessWeek, February 25, 2009

[Unfunded Health Costs for Calif. Workers Tops \\$48B](#) - BusinessWeek, February 25, 2009



Georgia's Worksite Health Initiative
Georgia DHR - Div. of Public Health
www.health.state.ga.us/programs/worksitehealth
WorksiteHealth@dhr.state.ga.us