

HealthNotes Vol III

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“More Simple Ways to Promote Health at Your Worksite”

As I’ve mentioned before in this column, there is a widespread consensus that promoting health at your worksite gives a solid return on investment. Payoffs include reduced absenteeism, improved morale, better staff retention, fewer on-the-job injuries and improved productivity, lowered claim frequency and overall reduction in health care costs. There is virtually no debate on the issue--promoting health at your worksite is good for your bottom line.

And while worksite wellness efforts can be complex and expensive for large companies, for small ones with less than fifty employees, promoting health on the job can be much simpler and inexpensive.

One way to begin is to pick up one of Healthy Casco Bay’s Worksite Wellness Packets, which are collections of resources and information designed to be put up on bulletin boards at your business. The information in these packets covers everything from depression to sun safety, and features eye catching posters and fliers that make it easy for you to begin to develop a culture of wellness at your job site. They are free and available at the Freeport Merchants’ Association office at the Firehouse Tower on 23 Depot Street, or you can call 541-8618, or drop an email to info@healthycascobay.org, to arrange to get yours.

But what if you want to do more than hang posters and provide information?

A recent article in the *American Chronicle* by John Bates, president of “Infinite Wellness Solutions”, a worksite wellness consulting business, provides a great list of simple, easy to achieve measures that a small business can take to promote a culture of wellness. This list is so good that I’ll be highlighting it in the next few columns, but if you want to see the complete article, visit <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/74617>.

Mr. Bates’ list begins with a list of physical activity and weight management ideas, which include:

1. Granting access to on- and off- worksite gyms and recreational programs before, during, and after work hours.
2. Offering and encourage participation in after work recreation or leagues.
3. Offering cash incentives or decreased insurance costs for participation in physical activity and/or weight management or maintenance programs.
4. Offering shower and/or changing facilities onsite.

5. Offering outdoor exercise areas such as fields and trails for worker use.
6. Offering bicycle racks in safe, convenient, and accessible locations.
7. Offering onsite fitness opportunities, such as group classes or personal training.
8. Offering an onsite exercise / fitness center.
9. Setting up programs that have strong social support systems and rewards, such as:
 - Buddy or team physical activity goals
 - Programs that involve staff members and family
 - Programs to encourage physical activity, such as pedometer walking challenges
 - Explore discounted or subsidized memberships at local health clubs, recreation centers, or YMCAs
10. Offering flexible work hours to allow for physical activity during the day.
11. Supporting physical activity breaks during the workday, such as stretching or walking.
12. Hosting walk-and-talk meetings.

Healthy Casco Bay, your local Healthy Maine Partnership, can provide technical assistance as you consider which of these ideas would work best for your worksite. While some of these ideas are free and some are not, all are simple enough that even a small business can implement a few to encourage better health in the workforce. And that's good business.

Yours in good health,

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