



# Physical Well-Being Fact Sheet

This document is part of a set of fact sheets that employers can use to begin, restart, or enhance initiatives to promote a culture of well-being at the workplace. Each fact sheet focuses on one of the six areas of workplace well-being: physical, emotional, social, community, financial, and career.

## What is physical well-being?

Physical well-being refers to having good health and enough energy to accomplish daily tasks. <sup>1</sup> Though some aspects of physical health are outside of an individual's immediate control (e.g., genetic history, environmental exposures), many others are related to lifestyle behaviors, such as healthy eating, participation in physical activity, and quality of sleep.

## Why is physical well-being important to an employer?

- Good health behaviors, such as improvements in nutrition and physical activity, and reduction or elimination of harmful practices, such as tobacco use, can impact the long-term health of employees and may reduce overall health care expenditures. <sup>2</sup> Physical activity lowers risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. <sup>3</sup> Regular exercise also has considerable health benefits for people with type 1 diabetes (e.g., improved cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, insulin sensitivity, etc.). <sup>4</sup>
- When employees feel their best physically, they will be more likely to have the energy to perform their best at work. In the absence of physical well-being, employees may be disengaged from their work. They may feel tired, stressed, or distracted by physical ailments or other issues that are causing them pain or discomfort. If able to prioritize their own health and adopt healthy behaviors, employees may find they have the needed energy to focus on their work.

## Why is physical well-being important to an employee?

- Feeling good and having good health will allow employees to have the energy to focus on tasks of daily life inside and outside of the workplace.
- Good health allows individuals to focus more on other endeavors, such as their own success and that of their families.
- Physical well-being reduces the burden of time-consuming and costly medical care.
- The ability to practice healthy habits helps individuals feel in control of their bodies and their lives.

## What can employers do to help promote physical well-being at the workplace?

Offering healthy food choices, creating an environment that supports physical activity and movement throughout the workday, and encouraging employees to make their personal health and well-being a priority can help support employees' physical well-being. Promoting physical well-being might also include providing ergonomically sound equipment to reduce musculoskeletal issues or supporting employees' ability to access preventive medical care.


To create an environment that supports physical well-being, start with short-term actions (things that are easy to start today) that begin to lay the foundation for your initiative, followed by longer-term strategies that may take more time or resources to implement.

It's best to pick a topic area of focus and create a plan that builds on the previous actions to work toward that goal. For example, if the goal is to support healthy eating choices in the workplace, an employer might implement the following plan:

### Goal: Support Healthy Eating Choices in the Workplace

| Short Term:<br>Inform and Nudge  |   | Long Term:<br>Policies and Norms  |
|--|--|---|
| Get employees thinking by posting messages where they will be making decisions about food. Post flyers in lunch areas, cafeterias, or break rooms that offer tips on healthy eating. Example: Diets, The Good, the Fad, and the Ugly or Healthy Plate Flier. | Incorporate fun programs or initiatives to support employees and add a social component. Run a healthy eating campaign or host a healthy eating potluck. Check out our Maintain Don't Gain Weight Management Toolkit for a fun campaign over the holiday season. | Create an environment at your workplace to support employees' healthy eating by incorporating Healthy Eating Guidelines into your business practices, such as in vending machines and catered food at meetings. Consider our Healthy Eating at Work Food Policy Toolkit to get started. |

### Goal: Support Healthy Eating Choices while Working Remote

| Short Term:<br>Inform and Nudge   |    | Long Term:<br>Policies and Norms  |
|---|---|---|
| Get employees thinking by sharing messages on a virtual board about food decisions. Send flyers out via email and offer tips on healthy eating. Example: Diets, The Good, the Fad, and the Ugly or Healthy Plate Flier. | Incorporate fun virtual programs or challenges to help employees build a virtual social network where they can share. Run a healthy eating campaign online where employees can communicate on virtual boards. Check out our Maintain Don't Gain Weight Management Toolkit for a fun campaign over the holiday season. | Create a culture that supports healthy eating habits by incorporating Healthy Eating Guidelines into your business practices. Consider accessing our Healthy Eating materials available on our Thrive at Work resource center site. |

## Other topic areas may include:

- Supporting physical activity in the workplace
- Promoting high-quality sleep
- Supporting tobacco cessation for employees
- Supporting and promoting weight management

Employers can look to Kaiser Permanente's Thrive at Work Resource Center, which provides information about how to implement many initiatives to address these goals. The site offers up to-date information about monthly health topics, toolkits, resource guides, fliers, and more.



Additional ideas and information are available on the sites linked below:

**Healthy Eating | Fitness and Exercise | Healthy Weight | Tobacco Cessation**

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Clifton, J, Harter, J. Well-being at Work. Gallup Press; 2021.

<sup>2</sup> McLellan, RK. Work, Health, and Worker Well-being: Roles and Opportunities for Employers. Health Affairs. 2017;36(2): 206-13.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prediabetes. June 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/prediabetes.html>

<sup>4</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes. April 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/active.html>

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