



OCCUPATIONAL
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P H Y S I C I A N S

FULL SERVICE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CLINICS EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE

OUR EXPERIENCE

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ONSITE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

ARE “ONSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM” NEW?

Actually onsite wellness programs have been around for over 30 years. Employers were first introduced to the concept of investing in health promotion programs in the 1970s. By the 1980s, employers were spending \$5 per employee on work-place wellness programs and today they’re spending up to \$60 per employee for year-around programs that range from smoking cessation to stress reduction classes.

WHY SHOULD OUR COMPANY INVEST IN ONSITE WELLNESS

Studies indicate that “a healthy employee is a happy employee, and a happy and healthy employee keeps productivity high and health care costs low.” This may sound elementary and really, *too* simple, but companies are finding it to be true prediction.

From an employer’s viewpoint, unhealthy lifestyles are the leading cause of an alarming rise in workplace issues like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and chronic illness.

Companies can see the impact in escalating health insurance premiums and claims cost, increased absenteeism and declining productivity.

The health of the community impacts the economic health of its businesses.

Employers draw workers from their community. If the local population smokes too much, drinks too much and exercises too little, these employers will likely have workers with multiple health risk factors. Research has shown that workers with multiple health risks ultimately cost employers more than workers without these health risks.

Another aspect to consider is the aging workforce and the inherent stress in employees’ lives. Because a greater percent of the population is “elderly” and people are working more years, chronic health problems and normal “wear and tear” of the body will impact health status.

HAS THE GOVERNMENT MADE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING HEALTH IN THE WORKFORCE?

They certainly have. The Healthy People 2010 report issued by the Surgeon General and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services outlines goals and objectives for companies to achieve. The two primary work-site objectives are to have all employers, regardless of size, offer a comprehensive employee health promotion program and have all employees participate in employer-sponsored programs by the year 2010.

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The Partnership for Prevention in Washington, D.C. outlined eight of the 50 objectives as “Leading Health Objectives for Employers.” They are as follows:

1. reduce tobacco use
2. reduce the cost of lost productivity in the work place due to alcohol and drug use
3. increase the proportion of adults who engage regularly in moderate physical activity
4. increase the proportion of adults who are at a healthy weight
5. reduce deaths from work-related injuries
6. reduce work-related injuries resulting in medical treatment, lost time, or restricted work activity
7. insure more workers
8. insure more workers with preventive services.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC BENEFITS TO HAVING AN “ONSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM?”

- A well run program can have a measurable impact on health care costs.
- Wellness programs are an efficient and cost-effective way to encourage workers to lead healthier lives, and healthier employees mean lower costs for employees and employers.
- It helps employees take some responsibility for their own health.
- There is a greater return from investment in *preventing* healthy people from slipping into poor health behaviors than by trying to make chronically sick people well. The company in turn, benefits in terms of less medical care costs and greater productivity.

WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS ARE INCLUDED IN AN ONSITE WELLNESS PROGRAM?

Onsite wellness programs can provide a range of wellness and health promotion services. Examples of programs are as follows:

- **Health Risk Assessment.** This involves having the employee fill out a questionnaire to determine if they are at risk for certain types of diseases. This assists the health care provider in tailoring a program that will address the most common health and wellness issues. It also gives the employee a report outlining their health risks with recommendations to discuss with their regular healthcare provider.
- **Health Promotion Programs.** These types of programs can be multifaceted and address most of the chronic health care problems with emphasis on prevention. These programs may include:
 1. Health screenings for cholesterol level, blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, etc.
 2. Flu shots are an effective way for healthy adults to help reduce the amount of lost work time, upper respiratory illnesses, and number of

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doctor visits.

3. Seminars of 30-60 minutes designed to help employees make decisions about healthier lifestyles and to take a better approach to fitness and exercise, longevity, nutrition, and exercise options for office workers.
4. Smoking cessation programs.
5. On-site workout programs.
6. Diet counseling.
7. Health fairs which can incorporate selected health screenings with counseling and educational programs.

IS THERE ANY HARD DATA TO SUPPORT THE BENEFIT OF THESE PROGRAMS?

- According to a joint survey of 275 employers conducted by Watson Wyatt Worldwide and The Nation Business Group on Health in Washington, D.C., about 41% of respondents already incorporated health and productivity incentives into their health care planning and 32% plan to do so within the next year.
- A survey of 365 of the nation's leading companies found that 62 % of companies said they implemented wellness programs to improve employee health, and another 33% said they were considering such programs. Only 5 percent of the companies surveyed said they don't have wellness programs or plans for them, and only 2 percent of those with wellness programs said rising health care costs played no role in adopting them. When asked, "Do you believe that helping employees lead healthier lifestyles will make a noticeable difference to the companies health care costs?" Four percent said, "Yes, we expect to see immediate improvement." 80 percent said, "Yes, but it will take a while to see results." 14 percent said, "Possibly, but there are other reasons we wanted to do this." Two percent said, "No, we don't expect to have a measurable impact." (*Healthy News Service, Washington, D.C., 6/22/2005*)
- The Health Management Research Center (HMRC) at the University of Michigan conducted research that showed that work-place wellness programs save employers \$80 to \$225 per employee per year in medical care costs and an equal amount in productivity gains. (University of Michigan, 3/2001)
- The first long term evaluation of the financial and health impact of a large-scale corporate health and wellness program was conducted for Johnson & Johnson, which is the world's most comprehensive and broadly-based health care company. The study was conducted by MEDSTAT Group, Inc., of Ann Arbor, Michigan. The evaluation included a financial analysis of medical insurance claims for 18,331 of their employees who participated in the Health & Wellness Program from 1995-1999. More than 90 percent of all eligible employees chose to participate in the wellness program. What were the results?
 1. A reduction in medical care costs amounted to a savings per employee of \$225 annually.
 2. Savings grew over time, and most came the 3rd or 4th year after the program began.
 3. Johnson & Johnson savings averaged \$8.5 million annually when

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comparing figures for the 5 year period prior to the program with 4 years after its institution.

There were reductions in employee health risks – tobacco use, sedentary lifestyle, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, low dietary fiber, and poor motor vehicle safety practices. (*Johnson & Johnson, New Brunswick, N.J., 1/24/2002*)

If you have any questions regarding implementing an Onsite Wellness Programs at your company or would like an inservice at your company regarding this subject, please contact Amy McCulloch, RN, Client Service Coordinator at 812-283-2013.