



Safe Environments

Healthy Workers

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS?

Wellness programs and initiatives have become a trend in workplaces as employers hope to better the quality of life of their employees, create a healthy culture and save on future health care costs. The benefit of any program, however, is dependent on employees' participation, among other things. Research shows that many are not even aware of what their employer offers and the wellness programs available to them, and when they are, not everyone participates. Here is why you should become aware, and participate in your workplace wellness programs and take advantage of what your employer is offering:



5 REASONS TO PARTICIPATE IN WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

1. **Better overall wellbeing** – wellness programs have positive affect on physical, social, and mental wellbeing
2. **Increased productivity** – with better health and work-life balance, employees are shown to miss less days of work due to sickness, and be more productive
3. **Better sense of community** – when employees participate together
4. **Healthy work culture** – your participation and enthusiasm can contribute to better health culture at the workplace
5. **Ownership of your health** – say yes to making healthy choices by participating

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS?

BEING AWARE OF WHAT YOUR EMPLOYER OFFERS

An American study by Gallup research found that only 60% of employees are aware of what wellness programs their company offers, and out of those, only 40% participated in the program – meaning that only 24% of employees are participating in wellness programs¹. In our healthy worker survey, things looked more hopeful with 50% of participants indicating that they use available workplace wellness initiatives². However, that still leaves the other half of employees not taking advantage of the resources made available to them which can bring positive health outcomes.

Many factors are at play when considering why you may hesitate to partake in those programs. You may lack time, energy, have other priorities pressing, and feel like the circumstances are a barrier to healthy choices. Not every employer offers wellness programs and not every wellness program is well designed and relevant to the demographics of the workplace. Sometimes these reasons are legitimate, and many times they are excuses based on poor awareness of the programs or merely wanting to postpone getting in the habit of making healthy choices. But it's those choices that can improve your well-being.

Take action: Become aware of what your employer offers

Read the health and safety board postings

Check your work email for new initiatives and events

Look at your health benefits plan to make sure you know exactly what is offered

Some benefits take longer to understand, but it's important to know what resources are available to you. Many employees are unaware of the range of services the Employee Assistance Programs offer. The EAPs are the most commonly offered programs by the employers and often cover you and your family. They can provide counselling services when your family is going through a difficult time, health advice, maternity resources, therapy for when you need someone to talk to, and more.

CHOOSING TO SAY YES TO WELLNESS INITIATIVES

You may pause to think whether you have any programs available at your workplace but look for more than the traditional gym memberships. Well-being goes beyond physical health, which is why employers are starting to offer new ways to promote wellbeing. More and more employers are offering flexible hours, working from home options, and better benefits to encourage holistic health in their employees. It is becoming more common for employers to provide chiropractic services coverage, community charity

¹ O'Boyle E. & Harter J. (2014). Why your workplace wellness program isn't working. Gallup

² Healthy Worker Survey Results. (2018). PSHSA

events, on-site celebrations, wellness competitions like walking/fitness challenges, healthy food choices in the cafeteria or vending machines, standing workstations and other creative initiatives³.

Take action: Say yes to the initiatives and participate. It will be worth it.

TAKING THE INITIATIVE WHEN THERE AREN'T ANY

If your employer is not providing any wellness programs, you can be a change in your workplace. Your employer may not see a benefit in any additional health promotion initiatives until one of their employees shows them what it can look like, and that it doesn't have to cost a lot.

Some programs are started by employees themselves – lunchtime walking clubs, different health campaigns and challenges, an annual day in the park playing sports, encouraging co-workers to join a marathon, etc. Take the initiative and show your participation in the life of your workplace. It may take time, many small slow steps, and push through people's lack of enthusiasm to encourage your workplace to have a culture that is excited about health initiatives. It takes one to start the change, but it always spreads.

Take action: Consider how you can start to involve your coworkers to be more active or healthy together

RELEVANT RESOURCES

McGill University study [shows workplace wellness programs yield positive effects for Canadian employees](#)
[ParticipACTION](#) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to help Canadians sit less and move more.

The [Build Your Best Day](#) site is a fun, interactive and educational tool to help children and youth aged 5-17 and their parents learn about the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines.

CMHA mental health meter <https://cmha.ca/mental-health-meter>

CMHA work-life balance quiz <https://cmha.ca/work-life-balance-quiz>

CMHA Stress Index <https://cmha.ca/whats-your-stress-index>

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³ <https://www.benefitspro.com/2017/06/08/wellness-programs-on-the-rise-as-employers-consider/?slreturn=20180709140131>