

# Get healthier on the job



Workplace wellness programs can make you feel – and work – better.

**MAINTAINING HEALTHY HABITS** can be a round-the-clock occupation, so what do you do if you have a full-time job? It is possible to both work and be healthy. With more and more companies offering workplace wellness programs, employees can access tools to boost their overall well-being at the office.

A good wellness program not only helps support your career, but also your emotional, financial, physical and social well-being.<sup>1</sup> Programs vary by employer and can include initiatives such as nutrition seminars, access to low-cost exercise options, biometric screenings, ergonomic services and stress relief workshops. They can help participants set goals, provide flexible work schedules, offer social support and promote a healthy physical environment. If your employer has one, consider participating. Here are just a few benefits.

## Walk off stress

Many workers spend most of their day sitting at a desk in front of a computer screen. Not only can this promote eye strain, it can cause muscle tension in the neck and back – all major contributors to fatigue.

Wellness initiatives that get you moving can help counter the effects of desk work. Physical activity, even walking with a group at lunch, stimulates brain chemicals that can promote happiness and relaxation. It also helps the cardiovascular system function more efficiently, giving you more energy to tackle daily tasks.<sup>2</sup> Program activities might include providing employees with stretching exercises they can do at their desks or offering fitness breaks. Companies may also educate employees on proper ergonomics or perhaps even provide ergonomic desks, chairs or keyboards.<sup>3</sup>

## Mix it up

The social side of wellness programs is a huge plus. There's nothing like exercising as a team to help you bond – or at least, give you something to talk about the next day. Participating in activities that are not work-related is a great excuse to mix up social dynamics and strike up a conversation with a co-worker in a different department. You may just find yourself creating new friendships, without the pressure of formal networking. Keeping your nose to the grindstone isn't the only factor in a successful career.

<sup>1</sup> <http://hbr.org/2016/03/how-to-design-a-corporate-wellness-plan-that-actually-works>

<sup>2</sup> [www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise/art-20048389](http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise/art-20048389)

<sup>3</sup> [www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/worksite-wellness/five-benefits-workplace-fitness-culture](http://www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/worksite-wellness/five-benefits-workplace-fitness-culture)

Making fitness a group activity also does wonders for motivation levels. Think of it as peer pressure, but the good kind. Colleagues can encourage each other to achieve fitness goals and generally feel part of the group.<sup>4</sup>

### **Learn healthier habits**

Healthy habits like meditating and eating right can help improve productivity and performance. Your brain can focus better on tasks and you will feel more accomplished and energized.<sup>5</sup> However, though quitting smoking, improving your diet or hitting the gym may not be newsworthy feats, they certainly aren't easy. Habits can be extremely difficult to change, and any step in the right direction is a step worth taking. By providing tools and proper support, companies can help employees change exercise behaviours, increase fruit and vegetable intake, decrease body weight, try a smoking cessation program or maintain mental health.<sup>6</sup>

### **All work and no play**

Have you ever felt your day just dragging on? A wellness program can help to break up the monotony of your workday – it might provide an opportunity to do some stretches or yoga, attend a seminar on relaxation techniques or eat a healthy snack. Not only can you learn about nutrition and healthy habits, you can develop new relationships with co-workers and try things you may not have considered before. Don't be surprised if you find yourself feeling happier, more energetic and more motivated to come into the office each day.

### **Get involved**

Ultimately, adopting healthy habits is an individual decision, but a workplace wellness program can encourage employees to take charge of their own well-being. It's an easy way to get healthier, stay motivated and have fun. ■

<sup>4</sup>[www.sparkpeople.com/resource/wellness\\_articles.asp?id=246](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/wellness_articles.asp?id=246)

<sup>5</sup>[www.healthfitnessrevolution.com/top-10-benefits-of-a-workplace-wellness-program](http://www.healthfitnessrevolution.com/top-10-benefits-of-a-workplace-wellness-program)

<sup>6</sup>[www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2016/04/21/8-things-you-need-to-know-about-employee-wellness-programs/2/#6e4221eb7a2e](http://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2016/04/21/8-things-you-need-to-know-about-employee-wellness-programs/2/#6e4221eb7a2e)