

HSA Employer News!

April 2012

Employee Health and Fitness Month Is Coming Up!

May is Employee Health and Fitness month. What are you doing to encourage your employees to get and stay healthy?

Getting and staying healthy is more than a personal benefit. When employees stay healthy, employers see a reduction in healthcare utilization, which in turn can avoid spikes in overall healthcare costs. So, how does an employer motivate employees to stay healthy? A popular way is by implementing a company wellness program.

Whether employers work with their healthcare carrier to implement an established Health and Wellness program or they choose to put together a program on their own, this could be the best investment an employer can make.

As with any new program, success comes with communication and involvement from all parties. Encourage employee participation in planning a work wellness program by forming a committee that includes employees or by holding focus groups to get employees' input. Having employee buy-in on a wellness program will help the program be successful, and as a result, everyone benefits.

There are several ways to start a company wellness program, ranging from encouraging exercise to offering healthier lunch options.

Exercising

- Reach out to a local gym to see whether it would offer a discount to your employees. This is a win for both parties, as the employer can offer it as a benefit, and the gym owner can gain members and increase revenue.
- Provide everyone with a pedometer and encourage employees to take a 10-minute walk each day during one of their breaks.
- Recommend that employees team up with other employees in order to support and motivate each other. When we have a partner or someone to motivate us, we are more likely to set and meet our fitness goals.

Healthier Eating

- Nowadays, we are all about convenience. Onsite food services are very convenient and, in most cases, a benefit in the eyes of employees. So, offer more healthy foods in your cafeterias and snack machines.
- For employers who do not have an onsite cafeteria, look into having refrigerators and microwaves available for employees so that they may bring in a packed, healthy lunch from home. Or, look into having a food truck visit your

office building each day to offer healthy, fresh foods, such as locally grown fruits and vegetables, which would also help support your local economy. There are lots of "healthy" food trucks that serve salads, sandwiches, veggie burgers, organic meats, fruits, or even a healthier take on the classic hot dog!

Classes and Onsite Services

- Offer an onsite nutrition class for your employees, their spouses and their children. Healthy eating habits need to continue at home, and getting family buy-in helps make that happen.
- Bring in a medical professional to provide free flu shots or blood pressure checks.
- Start a quit-smoking program.

Motivate Through Recognition

- Everyone responds to being recognized for a job well done. Consider rewarding your employees with prizes, gift cards or time off for their healthy efforts.
- Implement a points or credits program for attending classes that are offered onsite, participating in an office version of a "Biggest Loser" contest, spending hours at the gym or walking a certain distance each day.

Case studies conducted by Wellworks For You have shown that within the first two years of a wellness program being implemented, employers' annual healthcare renewal rate increases went from the high 30 percent range down to single digits. Plus, their Return on Investment (ROI) increased from \$1.34 the first year to \$11.15 the second year.

Encourage Your Employees to Schedule Their Preventive Care Appointments for 2012

Preventative care visits are important for everyone. Staying on top of one's "well health" can mean early detection or even prevention of life-threatening medical conditions. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, your employees' preventative care visits may be covered at 100% through your insurance plan.

Preventive care services include mammograms, colonoscopies, pediatrician well visits and immunizations. To learn more about the Affordable Care Act and to view a full list of covered preventative care services, visit <http://www.healthcare.gov/law/features/rights/preventive-care/index.html>.