



5 steps to weight management in the workplace

Take a holistic approach to encourage healthier habits and foster employee well-being.



1 Start by identifying employee needs.

Only one in five jobs in the U.S. workforce is considered physically active.¹ That means most of us spend the majority of our working hours sitting. When you add in commuting time and watching TV from the couch, it's estimated the average office worker spends up to 15 hours a day sitting down.²

It's no surprise that weight-related health concerns, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, continue to impact millions of workers. As a result, companies are facing rising healthcare costs, increased absenteeism, and reduced productivity.

The good news? Workplace culture can play a significant role in driving health behaviors that contribute to weight loss and overall well-being. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time workers average 42.5 hours per week at work, which means—for better or worse—work environments influence a large portion of our waking hours each day.³

Today, employers are wisely connecting the dots between a healthier workforce and a healthier bottom line. By creating a workplace culture that helps employees understand the impact of their lifestyle decisions while supporting their efforts to make healthy choices to manage their weight, employers can make a difference. Successful weight management at the workplace takes a holistic approach to well-being that encompasses education, preventative support, and tools to help employees deal with the physical and emotional root causes.

Take these five steps to prioritize employee health with weight management in the workplace.

Before building a weight-management program for your company, assess employee needs and interests. Consider conducting an anonymous employee survey or focus group to get a sense of a typical workday and the types of programs employees may need. Here are some questions you can ask:

- **Which health topics would you like to see included in a well-being program?**
- **What types of programs would you feel most comfortable using?**
Examples: Attending in-person meetings, using a fitness app, group fitness classes, one-to-one coaching, etc.
- **Do you typically take regular breaks during the day? If no, why?**
- **What is your preferred way to receive information on well-being initiatives?**

Be sure to include some voluntary background questions related to factors such as age and gender to further tailor the offerings. You can also include a call to action by asking participants to list their contact information if they are interested in promoting the new initiatives in the workplace.

2

Turn the healthier choice into the easier choice.

How to fit fitness into work

Walking meetings:

Arrange to meet your colleagues at a central location in the office or outside, and have your discussion while walking.

Alternative desks:

From standing desks to treadmill desks, there are plenty of options that help you get the blood flowing at work.

Ditch the chair:

Swap your chair for a yoga ball to engage those core muscles!

Fitness challenges:

Offer a company-wide fitness challenge to engage the full population in getting healthier, such as a steps challenge where employees can use a fitness tracker.



Make it easy!

We all know that making healthier choices, especially during the final stretch of the day, can be difficult. So, why not make it as easy as possible for employees to develop and manage a healthier lifestyle? Consider a range of simple changes that convey your commitment to employee health.

Provide healthier snack choices

Consider replacing the traditional office vending machine fare of candy and chips with more nutritious options, such as popcorn, nuts, and lean-protein snacks. From the satisfying crunch of baked chips to the sweetness of an apple, there's a variety of healthier snacking options. Also, rethink those drinks! Try replacing sugary sodas with flavored sparkling water or 100 percent fruit juice.

Maximize your staff cafeteria

If your workplace has a staff cafeteria, adding options such as fresh fruit, yogurt, a salad bar, and whole grains, can make selecting healthier choices convenient. You may also want to consider changing the order of where the options appear. For example, if you have the salad bar upfront it may encourage people to fill their plates with salad first, leaving less room for those less nutritious items. Another change to consider is **listing the nutrition breakdown** for each item on the menu. This helps employees make informed choices.

Offer programs to make meeting nutrition goals easier

Make choices easier by **initiating an on-site WW program** where employees can follow the program to evaluate and track healthier choices based on their own nutrition goals.

Ditch those desks

According to multiple studies, greater sedentary time is linked to an increase in the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and chronic health conditions.⁴ With that in mind, you can kick “death by desk” to the curb by incorporating fitness into your office culture. To make this all seem possible, encourage employees to set short-term and realistic goals that inspire them to move more throughout the day. Even one lap around the office or a quick stroll outside makes a difference.

Other popular options include installing standing desks, adding an on-site gym to work facilities, offering in-house fitness classes (such as yoga or Pilates), implementing walking meetings, and piloting a bike or walk-to-work program. Many companies have embraced a more creative and cost-effective approach to get employees on their feet. For example, Google is famous for its on-site fitness centers, yoga classes, and bocce courts. ConocoPhillips takes creativity a step further with an exercise class option called, “I don't really want to sweat” that's designed to encourage less athletic employees.⁵



3 Consider mental health and emotional well-being.

Healthier minds, healthier bodies

The most successful holistic weight-management programs not only address their employees' physical health, but also consider their mental health and emotional well-being. As employees rise to the challenges of the modern workplace, such as working longer hours and taking on responsibilities outside of their normal job descriptions, it can take a toll on their physical and emotional well-being. In 2019, the World Health Organization classified burnout as an occupational phenomenon that influences an employee's health.⁶ Take a preventative stance to help employees take on the challenges of job stress and work-life balance.

Build community support

Preventative health initiatives are most successful when combined with elements of support or community involvement. One way to incorporate this is to carve out time during the day for employees to meet with their colleagues to pursue a common goal. For example, many organizations offer on-site WW Wellness Workshops for their employees to discuss their weight-management journey. These Workshops can offer a sense of support to employees, and can inspire and motivate them to make changes they might not have made on their own. Furthermore, building community support for well-being initiatives drives home the message that successful weight management is a communal effort. It demonstrates that an organization is committed to helping employees foster healthier habits while increasing employee quality of life.

Take a break

All work and no play does not lead to productivity—in fact, it hinders it! Bust this myth by encouraging employees to take short, 15-minute breaks throughout the workday to relax and refresh their minds. Studies have shown that taking short breaks leads to increased concentration and productivity.⁷ However, the key to making these breaks successful is encouraging employees to complete a task that is non-work related. Research has indicated that taking short breaks to engage in fun, non-work related activities leads to higher levels of positive emotions, while taking breaks to engage in other work-related tasks is associated with negative emotional experiences.⁸ Whether it's taking a walk with a colleague, playing a game, or watching a funny video, encourage your employees to take time out of their day to recharge.



4

Show top-down support.



Get your leaders on board

When weight management is important to leadership, it becomes important to employees, too. According to the American Psychological Association’s 2016 Work and Well-Being Survey, 73 percent of employees with managers who show support through involvement and commitment to well-being initiatives said, “their organization helps employees develop a healthy lifestyle,” compared with just 11 percent who work in an organization without that leadership support.⁹ Company leaders can do their part by encouraging employees to get involved in well-being programs, participating themselves, and carving out time during the day for employees to take part.

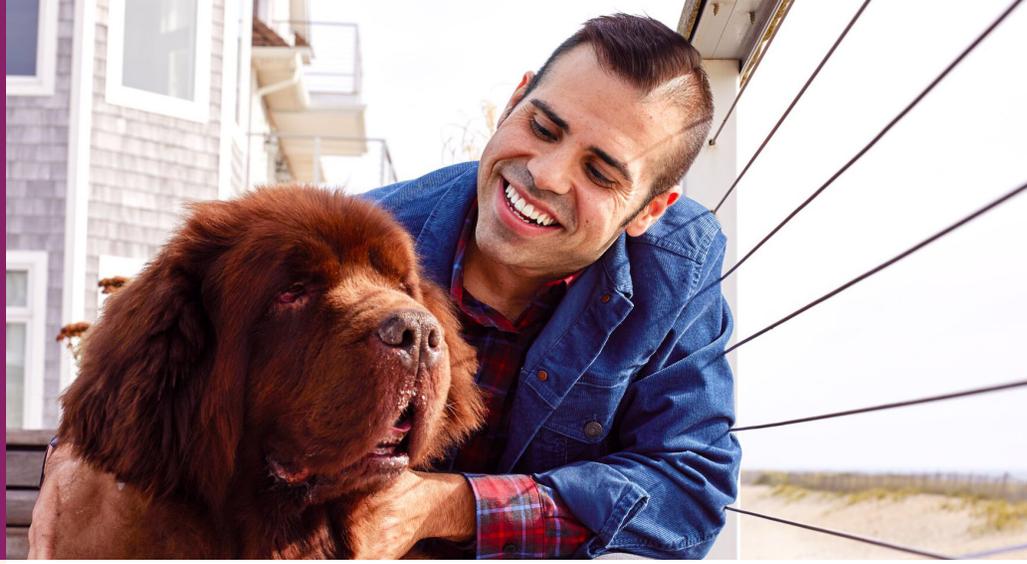
Holistic programs must include mental and emotional components to address some of the root causes that prevent successful weight management. Additionally, weight-management programs have demonstrated a positive correlation to increased productivity, lower disability costs, stronger retention rates, better employee engagement, and a 25 percent decrease in the number of sick days.¹⁰

Designate wellness leaders

Consider investing in a well-being coordinator or health advocate to manage well-being initiatives and drive employee engagement. For example, Zappos employs a wellness coordinator who plans fun on-site and off-site activities during work hours to encourage employees to have fun with fitness.¹¹ Not only do employees get to socialize with coworkers while participating in an engaging activity, but also they get a much needed mental health break from the stress of everyday work. If hiring a wellness coordinator is not possible, consider assembling an internal team of hand-raisers who have identified specific health challenges within the organization.

5

Get creative to inspire participation.



Make it a game!

The phrase “Weight-Loss Challenge” can sound a bit daunting, so consider adding a gamification aspect to encourage employees to participate and enjoy the fun nature of the activity. For example, some companies have had great success with the WW Weight-Loss Challenge, a turnkey, 12-week weight-loss competition. The program challenges teams of four to nine employees to achieve a combined six percent weight loss across the entire team. All participants contribute a specific amount to the jackpot prize (which can also be partially subsidized by the company), and the winning team splits the money evenly. By competing together as a team, the challenge becomes more about working together toward a shared well-being goal. Less pressure, better results!

A little motivation goes a long way

Getting employees interested and engaged is the final step to implementing a successful weight-management program. Consider incentives that positively enforce participation, but strike a balance. Programs that become too incentive heavy can shift the focus from adopting healthier lifestyle choices to completing tasks purely for a reward.

Get inspired by offering creative incentives—often at little or no cost—to promote employee engagement.

Employee spotlights

Reward participating employees with a small feature or spotlight on heavily trafficked company platforms, such as an internal newsletter or the intranet portal.

Convenience incentives

Make healthy choices easier than ever! Piloting a new bike-to-work program? Drive engagement by installing bike racks on-site.

Surprise incentives

Randomly reward employees for participation with exciting prizes, such as a free healthy lunch or tickets to a local event.

Leverage technology

Offer the latest fitness trackers to employees who participate in a well-being program or challenge.

Actionable incentives

Offer reimbursement toward monthly gym fees, weight-management programs such as WW Health Solutions, and healthier meal prepping services.



It's a journey, not a destination

A successful, holistic weight-management program is indispensable to the foundation of your business. These programs keep employees healthier and happier, which in turn can increase productivity, combat absenteeism, and offset the rising healthcare costs associated with weight-management challenges. Even more encouraging is the fact that holistic weight-management programs are not “one size fits all” in terms of resources and costs. From completely subsidizing the cost of a program like WW to simply replacing traditional vending machine fare with healthier options, there are a variety of ways to implement a holistic weight-management program that addresses employee needs without breaking the bank.

Holistic weight management should be viewed as a strategy to continuously promote healthier and manageable habits that address each employee's physical, mental, and emotional challenges through preventative measures. It's a way for employers to continue increasing their employees' quality of life, and ultimately affect positive change on the healthcare ecosystem as a whole.

Simply put: when employers invest in holistic weight-management programs, everyone wins.

“ Weight-management programs, paired with creative incentives, can empower employees to discover and adopt a positive lifestyle that prioritizes their health and well-being, evoking a lasting sense of pride.”

Dr. Gary Foster,
Chief Scientific Officer, WW



**Health
Solutions**

WW Health Solutions, a division of WW International, is committed to helping organizations across the U.S. improve the health of their employees. As experts in wellness for over 50 years, we anchor corporate well-being initiatives with the most scientifically proven program to promote sustainable behavior change and achieve reductions in obesity, chronic illness, and related healthcare costs. We enable employers, health plans, and consumers to go beyond the scale to improve overall well-being by offering multiple ways to succeed along the road to healthy living: eating healthier, moving more, and shifting mindset while seamlessly integrating into the places where we work and live. For further information about how you can partner with WW Health Solutions, contact us at **1-800-8-AT-WORK (800-828-9675)** or visit us at www.weightwatchers.com/hr.

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