



Physical Activity in the Workplace
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WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAMS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Studies show that employees who participate in physical activity increase their energy and productivity levels and, not surprisingly, take fewer sick days. People with disabilities can reap extra health benefits, such as reducing their risk for developing additional health problems.

When developing a worksite wellness program, it's important to address the needs of all employees, regardless of their physical limitations. Remember, too, that not all disabilities are visible, and that many people develop disabilities as they grow older. While you may need to modify your activities to accommodate people with disabilities, you will find that many of these changes are simple and inexpensive.

Consider adopting the following suggestions to help ensure that your wellness program is a winning choice for everyone!

WHEN SELECTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE

- Give people with disabilities a vested interest in your wellness program. Involve them in all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation. Encourage their feedback; listen to their concerns and suggestions.
- Ensure that settings and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities (i.e., safe, accessible and attractive trails for bicycling, walking and wheelchair activities; activity rooms with doorways wide enough for a wheelchair; accessible parking spaces and public transportation).
- Review the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, a comprehensive federal law that protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities. It explains how to achieve accessibility at the workplace either without making physical changes to it, such as assigning an activity to a room better equipped for wheelchairs, or by making physical changes, such as adding a ramp. For a copy of the ADA, call the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission at 1-800-669-3362.
- Encourage on-site wellness program coordinators and health care professionals to routinely talk to employees with disabilities about the program's benefits.
- Encourage program facilitators to learn how to adapt exercises and become familiar with adapted equipment that can be used by persons with disabilities.
- Underscore the benefits of physical activity for people with disabilities in the company newsletter, and in letters and fact sheets distributed with paychecks and health insurance materials, or through the electronic mail system and the company's web site.
- Help people with disabilities achieve optimal benefits. Encourage them to consult their physicians before beginning a physical activity program and to make necessary modifications.

WHEN PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Remember, staying fit is especially important for people with disabilities, many of whom live sedentary lifestyles.
- People with disabilities are less likely to engage in regular physical activity, yet they may have a similar, if not greater, need to promote their health and prevent additional health problems.
- Attract people with disabilities to your program by promoting the benefits.
- Remind people with disabilities that, when they are physically active, they are less likely to develop additional health problems, like heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis or arthritis; to gain excess weight; or become depressed.
- Circulate a list of the benefits of physical activity for people with disabilities.
Physical activity can...
 - Energize and increase stamina and strength;
 - Enhance mobility;
 - Help prevent pressure sores;
 - Help reduce spasticity;
 - Help strengthen bones;
 - Help control weight;
 - Improve the appetite and digestion;
 - Tone and strengthen muscles;
 - Keep joints, tendons and ligaments flexible for easy, unrestricted movement;
 - Improve heart and lung functions;
 - Strengthen the heart and improve circulation;
 - Improve blood pressure readings and glucose levels; and,
 - Help balance and agility.