



## **3 Steps to a Healthy Workplace**

**HEALTHY  
EATING**

**PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY**

**HEALTHY  
HABITS**

### 3 STEPS TO A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

A workplace wellness program—whether formal or informal—can reduce your company's healthcare costs by improving the health of your employees and their families.

Here are three simple steps to a healthy workplace: increase healthy eating at work, increase physical activity during the workday, and teach healthy habits that employees can take home to their families. This guide provides an overview of these steps.

#### Tips for a successful program

1. Get your company's leadership on board. If they're not already aware, show them the potential [return on investment](#) for employee health programs. Ask them to participate in the effort and be one of your role models.
2. When you're ready to start, encourage your company leader to promote the new policy or program in communications to all employees. [Get sample messages.](#)
3. As you get started, choose one or two policies or programs that make sense for your co-workers and work environment. Don't feel that you must do everything at once.
4. Let the effort evolve over time. Get feedback and refine your approach to ensure that the program or policy remains relevant, feasible and supportive of employees' goals.
5. Regularly share tips, tools and information on healthy habits with your co-workers and their families. Use the tools that work best for your organization: email, company newsletters, intranet, signage, posters, and other tools. [Get ideas.](#)





## STEP 1: INCREASE HEALTHY EATING AT WORK

You don't have to provide food at every meeting or event. When doughnuts, cookies, and other snacks are offered, they're just extra calories for most employees, not a replacement for their usual meal or snack.

### Provide healthy options.

If a meeting or event is long and food service is appropriate, keep it healthy:

- Serve smaller portions. The average bagel has doubled in size and calories in the past 20 years, so cut them in half. Likewise, sandwiches, desserts, and other items can be halved, even if on a self-serve buffet.
- Offer at least 2 fruit and/or vegetable servings at meal times, 1 fruit or vegetable serving for snacks. Whole fresh fruit, mixed fruit cups, dried fruit, crudité's, and steamed or roasted vegetables are all simple and affordable options.
- Serve dressings, sauces, and condiments on the side, so guests can control what—and how much—they consume.

### Always make water available.

Even a small drop in hydration affects our ability to concentrate. Sugary beverages like soda, sweetened tea, and lemonade actually deplete the body of water. To encourage water consumption:

- Serve only water, coffee, and unsweetened tea at meetings and events.
- Provide a water cooler, free bottled water, or filtered pitchers in break areas.
- Distribute company branded water bottles to encourage employees to stay hydrated, even when off-site.

### Do not rely on food-focused rewards.

Eliminate rewards like pizza parties and birthday celebrations that undermine employees' health. Replace them with rewards that are more meaningful, such as early release/extra paid time off or company branded merchandise (lunch bags, polo shirts, etc.) Brainstorm with your staff to identify the rewards they'll value most.

### Revamp vending machines.

Vending machines don't have to be chocked full of candy and chips to satisfy employees and generate revenue. Talk to your vendor about slowly making changes:

- Stock the healthiest items at eye level, and place the least healthy items on the bottom. This is an effective strategy of retail marketing.
- Make healthy items the least expensive. You will need to discuss pricing strategy with your vendor to determine how to do this.
- Include mostly whole grains, dried and dehydrated fruits without added sugar, and trail mixes that do not include yogurt or chocolate coatings.



## STEP 2: INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING THE WORKDAY

Everybody needs at least 60 minutes of moderate to rigorous physical activity—enough to feel your heart pumping and increased breathing—every day. Luckily, we don't have to get all 60 minutes at once. Help employees move more during the workday:



### Encourage use of stairs, park away from building.

Using the stairs and parking away from entrances are the two easiest ways to squeeze activity into busy lives.

- [Hang encouraging signs](#) on stairwell entrances, landings, and in elevator lobbies.
- Suggest a specific parking area for employees, and document it in the employee handbook.

### Provide fitness equipment.

Simple fitness equipment can fit easily in a break area or seldom used conference room. Employees should also have opportunities to use some equipment at their desks. Try these:

- resistance bands
- hand weights
- standing desks
- exercise balls
- under desk pedal exercisers

A stationary bike, elliptical, or treadmill can also be provided.

### Organize a walking group.

Invite co-workers to meet at a designated time and place to go on a 30-minute walk together. Being active with colleagues promotes teamwork and camaraderie while also reducing stress and improving cognitive functions.

#### CLICK & LEARN MORE

Learn how [Indiana Health Information Exchange \(IHIE\)](#), a mid-sized company located along the canal in downtown Indianapolis, launched an employee wellness program from a simple 30-minute "canal walk" twice a week.

### Incorporate "brain boosts."

Short bursts of physical activity rejuvenate employees, reduce stress, and improve concentration. Make "[Sit for 60, Move for 3](#)" an office mantra, encouraging three minutes of physical activity for every hour of sitting.

- Encourage meeting planners to write movement breaks into agendas. Participants can stand, walk, or stretch during this time.
- [Learn a few brain boost activities](#) and lead one at your next meeting. Encourage all managers to do the same. Make it fun.
- Lead by example. Periodically get up and walk to a colleague's desk instead of sending an email.

### STEP 3: TEACH HEALTHY HABITS THAT EMPLOYEES CAN TAKE HOME TO THEIR FAMILIES.

Use your existing communications tools to share practical, bite-sized wellness tips with employees. Feature a range of topics—such as how to make healthier choices when eating out, ways to squeeze more physical activity into each day, or healthy seasonal recipes. Try sharing the messages in your internal communications:

#### Newsletter.

Place a 1-2 paragraph wellness feature in your newsletter. If you use an enewsletter, you can include hyperlinks to more information.

#### Emails.

CEOs or other leaders can encourage wellness with monthly or weekly emails. Give the emails a fun, recognizable name like “Wellness Wednesday Tips” or “Friday Fitness Facts.” Use the same material you place in the company newsletter, or offer even shorter messages with a link for those who want to learn more.

#### Intranet.

If you have a private intranet site where you share company announcements, place monthly or weekly wellness messages there as well.

#### Get wellness messages you can use:

- [Quick messages for intranet, social media, and screen savers](#)
- [Short messages for emails and bulletin boards](#)
- [Long messages for newsletters or enewsletters](#)

### READY FOR MORE?

Jump IN for Healthy Kids works to create healthy environments where children and families have real opportunities to make healthy choices. We are here to support employers in their efforts to create healthy workplaces. Check out these other great resources:

- [4 Strategies to Increase Healthy Eating in the Workplace](#). Get sample menus, tips for working with caterers, and other ideas for replacing unhealthy meals and snacks with more meaningful rewards.
- [5 Simple Steps to Increase Physical Activity During the Work Day](#). Get in-depth tips and resources to encourage physical activity at the workplace.
- [5 Ways to Promote Healthy Habits to Employees and their Families](#). Learn how to create a comprehensive communications plan to share wellness resources with employees and their families.
- [Healthy Kids Blog](#). Get articles and tips to inspire your wellness initiatives. Reuse our material in your communications plan to teach healthy habits.

*Framework adapted from Let's Go! Healthy Workplaces Toolkit*

