

Worksite Wellness

Health Costs:

- At least one-quarter of the health care costs incurred by working adults are attributed to modifiable health risks such as tobacco use, diet, and lack of exercise.¹
- The indirect costs of poor health (e.g., absence or presence at work) can be two to three times the direct medical costs.²
- For many companies, medical costs consume 50 percent or more of corporate profits.¹
- The total cost of obesity to U.S. companies is estimated at \$13 billion per year. Health insurance costs related to obesity comprise the largest percentage of the total, followed by paid sick leave and disability insurance.³
- Obesity is associated with 39 million lost work days; 239 million restricted-activity days; 90 million bed days; and 63 million physician visits.²
- It costs employers an average of \$1500 more per year to insure an obese employee than it does someone of average weight.
- A total of \$350 is saved when a low-risk employee remains a low health risk; \$153 is saved when a high risk employee's health risks are reduced.¹
- Health care costs average \$1300 per year for an employee who smokes.¹
- Workplace alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use costs U.S. companies over \$100 billion each year.¹
- In Vermont, workers' health care premiums rose 57 percent between 2000 and 2004.⁴

Why Worksite Wellness:

- More than 81 percent of America's businesses with 50 or more employees have some form of health promotion program.⁵
- Healthy employees lead to improved performance, more productivity, less sick days, improved attitude, and improved morale.¹
- Employees who exercise as little as once a week have healthcare costs that are one-third to one-half lower than those who do not.
- A large-scale review of 42 published studies of worksite health promotion programs shows:²
 - An average of 28 percent reduction in sick days.
 - An average of 26 percent reduction in health costs.
 - An average of 30 percent reduction in workers' compensation and disability management claims.
 - An average \$5.93 to \$1 savings-to-cost ratio.

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Vermont Companies Taking Action:⁶

- Four hundred thirty employees at World Learning in Dummerston lost 1,270 pounds through Weight Watchers at work.
- At Engelberth Construction in Colchester, health insurance includes preventive benefits at no added cost to employees, and insurance discounts are granted for participating in screenings and classes. Ninety-three percent of Engelberth's 250 employees participate in wellness screenings.
- The 6,000 employees at IBM may continuously assess their health using online resources and personal interaction with health professionals. Employees can tailor their strategies to their personal needs, and employees can earn up to \$300 in rebates for completing health assessments and fitness activities.

1. Prevent Disease. (n.d.). Worksite Wellness. Retrieved June 1, 2006 from http://preventdisease.com/worksite_wellness/worksite_wellness.html.

2. Partnership for Prevention. (2005). Worksite health. Retrieved May 31, 2006 from <http://www.prevent.org/content/view/25/60/>.

3. National Business Group on Health. (n.d.). Healthy Weight, Healthy Lifestyles Primary Fact Sheet for the Institute on the Costs and Health Effects of Obesity. Retrieved May 30, 2006 from http://www.wbqh.org/pdfs/obesity_factsheet.pdf.

4. Vermont State Employees' Association. (2005). A Health Care System in Trouble. Retrieved May 31, 2006 from <http://www.vsea.org/index.php?option=news&task=viewarticle&sid=299>.

5. WELCOA. (n.d.). Corporate Wellness Makes a Bottom-Line Difference: The Cost Benefit of Worksite Wellness. Retrieved May 30, 2006 from http://www.welcoa.org/worksite_cost_benefit.html.

6. The Vermont Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. (2006). Worksite Wellness Recognition Awards. Retrieved May 30, 2006 from <http://www.vermontfitness.org/awards.html>.