

WORKSITE WELLNESS - A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT

Workplace programs improve blood pressure, diet and weight profiles of employees

Public Health Problem

- Four of the top ten most expensive health conditions to U.S. employers are related to heart disease and stroke.
- Adults spend many waking hours at work which makes the workplace environment integral to achieving a healthy lifestyle to prevent heart disease and stroke.
- Supportive environments that help workers control weight, eat a healthy diet and become more physically active can reduce absenteeism and health care costs and improve quality of life.

Program

- St. Vincent's Hospital Healthy Heart Program, with funding from the New York State Healthy Heart Program, worked with employers in New York, Kings, Queens and Richmond counties to create worksite wellness programs and increase opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy food at worksites for twenty-four thousand employees.
- Worksites formed wellness committees or chose a wellness coordinator before initiating programs. Programs were selected based on employee interest and worksite capabilities and included such innovative activities as on-site physical activity, blood pressure self-monitoring, subsidized intramural sports, and access to fresh produce through community-supported agriculture groups.

Impact

- Results from a sample of worksites shows:
 - Two companies negotiated discounts from insurance providers as a direct result of participation in this program.
 - A worksite weight management program resulted in almost all participants losing weight and most reporting they were eating more fruits and vegetables.
 - One site reported a significant ten-point decrease in average blood pressure of participants after one year of a self-monitoring program.
 - Most workers buying a share in community-supported agriculture for the first time reported an increase in fruit and vegetable intake as a result.
 - Two sites credit their worksite wellness program with sparing an employee serious injury because of their immediate action to seek emergency care when extremely high blood pressure was detected as part of their blood pressure monitoring program.
- Wellness coordinators shared: "Many participants lost weight, are feeling better about themselves, developed friendships, starting eating healthy ... and are drinking more water and sharing fruit instead of cake in the lunch room...."

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