

# Promoting Health in the Workplace

Support your employees' health starting today.



## A 12-Month Action Plan



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South County Economic  
Development Council

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# Promoting Health in the Workplace



## What is worksite wellness?

Worksite wellness involves activities that support healthy behavior in the workplace and improve the health of employees. **Worksite wellness can consist of a variety of activities such as health and nutrition education, health screenings, weight management programs, and fitness programs.** Worksites play an especially important role in improving the health of our cities and counties because more than 60% of adults are working, and many spend 2,000 or more hours a year at work.

### Did you know?

- Up to 30% of companies' yearly medical costs are spent on employees with the major heart risk factors—smoking, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, physical inactivity, and diabetes.
- A worksite wellness program can reduce sick leave by almost 27% and disability costs by more than 33%.

The good news is that there's a lot you can do to have a positive impact on your employees' health. This action plan can help. **This 12-Month Action Plan is designed to help small and medium-size businesses get started in developing their own worksite wellness program.**

Starting and/or maintaining a worksite wellness program is not difficult, and it does not have to be time-consuming or costly. **In fact, there are many simple, low- or no-cost things any employer can do to support the health of his or her employees.**

## How to use this 12-Month Action Plan

- Learn about the needs and interests of your employees.
- Choose one (or more) activity each month to promote health, wellness, and safety in your organization.
- When you complete an activity, check the box to track your progress and successes.

# Action Plan Overview



**This 12-Month Action Plan is intended to help you start or maintain a worksite wellness program at your worksite.**

- Each month addresses a specific health topic, with exception of December, which focuses on recognizing achievements made throughout the year.
- Suggested strategies and activities are also provided each month which ties into that month's health topic.
- The final page includes a brief monthly listing of health topics that are nationally recognized every month. These can help guide worksite wellness planning and implementation.
- Employees are perhaps the most valuable asset your business has. **Investing in employee health will help your employees, and your business, thrive!**

## Icon Description



Draws your attention to a tip to help support wellness efforts around that month's topic, or it provides a health fact that is important to know.

## Cultural Considerations

**Effective worksite wellness efforts take into account culture and diversity within the workplace.**

Organizations today employ people from diverse cultural backgrounds and some workers may have specific cultural needs or requirements to consider. A work environment that promotes and encourages respect for cultural differences and supports the physical and psychological well-being of its employees is more likely to result in healthier, more productive employees.

# Get Started



## Activities

Get your company ready:

- Sign up for the **LIVE WELL @ WORK** eNewsletter. Get the latest worksite wellness information delivered straight to your inbox.

Learn more:

- [UC San Diego Center for Community Health](#)

- Announce your worksite wellness initiative. Promote your program with emails, fliers, posters, and more. Brainstorm creative ways to encourage participation in worksite wellness activities and events.



Tip: Send emails about your program to your employees. It will demonstrate support and encourage their participation.

- Select a wellness champion. Choose a champion who can guide activities and work to increase participation in the program.



Tip: Look for someone who is enthusiastic, shows attention to detail, and likes to help others.

Learn more:

- [Develop a worksite wellness committee](#)

# January

Focus on: Prevention



## Strategies

- Announce a New Year's resolution at your workplace.  
Let your employees know that you're committed to supporting their health by promoting preventive services.  
  
Learn more:
  - [www.HealthyWorks.org](http://www.HealthyWorks.org)
- Encourage your employees to set New Year's health resolutions.  
Encourage your employees to share their resolutions with other staff members.
- Remind your employees to set up yearly checkups.  
Around the time of their birthday, remind employees to make check-up appointments with their doctor.



Tip: Research shows that people who share their goals are more likely to stick with them.

## Activities

- Discuss prevention at a staff meeting.
- Attach health-related fliers to employee pay stubs.
- Encourage employees to share their health success stories.

# February

Focus on: Heart Health



## Strategies

Get involved in Love Your Heart.

This one-day event offers free blood pressure screenings to the public throughout the San Diego region. Encourage your employees to “know their numbers” and take charge of their own heart health. As a business, there are several ways to get involved with Love Your Heart.

Learn more:

- [Visit www.LoveYourHeart.org](http://www.LoveYourHeart.org)

Discuss the ABCs of heart health.

Use fliers and email to encourage employees to discuss the ABCs of heart health during check-ups and preventive visits to their doctor.

The **ABCs** of heart health are:

**A**spirin therapy, **B**lood pressure levels, **C**holesterol levels, and **S**moking cessation.

Learn More:

- [ABCs from Million Hearts](#)

Sign up for the Heart at Work eNewsletter.

[Visit their website](#) to sign up for a newsletter from the American Heart Association (AHA). Each month, AHA will send you information and tips to help you create a heart-healthy workplace.

## Activities

- Communicate to your employees about the connection between unhealthy eating, lack of physical activity, and health conditions like heart disease and high blood pressure.
- Support employees’ efforts to be physically active during the work day by permitting comfortable walking shoes as part of acceptable workplace attire.

# March

Focus on: Nutrition



## Strategies

- Set up healthy vending machines.  
If you have vending machines at your workplace, work with your vendor to make sure that the food and beverage choices are healthy.

Learn more:

- [Vending Machine Food & Beverage Standards](#)

- Offer nutrition education materials to your employees.  
Provide easy-to-understand nutrition information to help employees make healthy choices.

Learn more:

- [Sharing nutrition tips with your employees](#)

- Support healthy eating by providing refrigerators, microwaves, and a space for employees to prepare nutritious food.

## Activities

- Make water readily available and encourage employees to drink it throughout the day.
- Provide an open fruit basket with a contribution box for employees to donate to keep it filled.
- Avoid having candy jars or snack jars in common spaces.



# April

Focus on: Physical Activity



## Strategies

- Start a walking club.  
Team activities can go a long way when it comes to motivating employees. Encourage your employees to get some physical activity during the workday.

Learn more:

- [Get help starting a walking club](#)
- [Find more walking tips](#)

- Allow your employees time for physical activity.  
Create and promote a policy that allows employees to take 1 to 2 physical activity breaks during the day to walk the stairs, stretch, or do other physical activities they enjoy.

Learn more:

- [Example of a physical activity policy](#)

- Offer educational resources about physical activity.  
Give your employees an idea of how to start adding physical activity to their everyday routines.

Learn more:

- [Share these physical activity tips from the CDC](#)



Tip: To start out, schedule walking at least 3 days a week for 20 minutes.

## Activities

- Encourage “walk and talk” meetings.
- Allow flexible lunch schedules so employees can exercise before, during, or after lunch.
- Include a short stretch break for meetings lasting longer than one hour.

# May

Focus on: Behavioral Health and Wellness



## Strategies

- Emphasize the importance of self-care for mental wellness. Encourage employees to seek out and utilize resources that support mental wellness.

Learn more:

- [It's Up to Us](#), the County of San Diego's mental health wellness website, offers 10 tips for living a full, enjoyable life

- Promote an alcohol- and drug-free workplace.

Learn more:

- For information on creating policies, programs and environmental changes to support an alcohol- and drug-free workplace, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/workplacehealthpromotion/health-strategies/substance-misuse/interventions/programs.html>



Did you know?

Approximately 1 in 5 American adults will have a mental health condition in any given year.

*Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

## Activities

- Connect to your health insurance plans and employee assistance program resources to promote mental health wellness.
- Download the [SAMHSA Drug-Free Workplace Toolkit](#) and develop a drug-free workplace policy.
- Call SAMHSA's Workplace Helpline at 1-800-WORKPLACE (967-5752) for additional assistance to employees.

### **For Immediate Assistance:**

If you or someone you care about needs to speak to someone or is in crisis and needs immediate help, please call the **Access & Crisis Line @ 888-724-7240**.

Trained and experienced counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to help you.

# June

Focus on: Workplace Safety and Fall Prevention



## Strategies

- Prevent Falls in the Workplace.**  
Provide a “Hazards in the Workplace” training for all employees to take and then have a follow-up discussion about the training with employees.  
Note: See “Hazards in the Workplace” sample training materials to get started in [Appendix 4](#).
  
- Implement a “Spot the Hazard” program for employees.**  
This is a safety awareness initiative to encourage employees to actively participate in timely identification and elimination of hazards in the workplace.  
It’s as easy as 1-2-3:
  1. Spot a hazard.
  2. Take action to remove the risk of injury from the hazard.
  3. Complete the “Spot the Hazard” form to detail the hazard and what was done to reduce its risk.Note: See “Spot the Hazard” sample material in [Appendix 5](#).
  
- Encourage employees to take charge of safety.**  
Offer praise and recognition to those that identify hazards and suggest solutions. A useful safety and health resource guide for small businesses is at [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#).

## Activities

- Develop a written plan for emergency response to medical events at your worksite, and post it prominently.
  
- Complete a Facility Safety Assessment (see [Appendix 6](#)) to identify hazards, make a plan, and track actions taken to correct them.

# July

Focus on: Summer Health and Safety Tips



## Strategies

- Educate your employees about working safely in summer heat. Tell your employees about heat stroke and exhaustion:

Learn more:

- [How to recognize its symptoms](#)
- [Steps to avoid it](#)

- Arrange work activities that match employee's physical condition and the temperature.

## Activities

- Encourage workers to wear hats, sunscreen and lightweight clothing when working outdoors.
- Provide water and encourage employees to drink throughout the day in hot weather.
- Remind them to cool off in the shade or an air conditioned building.

# August

Focus on: Breastfeeding Support and Accommodation



## Strategies

- Confirm that you have a policy regarding breastfeeding. Remember, breastfeeding support in the workplace is healthy for your employees and their families—and, it's the law! If you don't have a policy in place, there is help available.

Learn more:

- [View a sample breastfeeding policy](#)
- [Visit www.breastfeeding.org](http://www.breastfeeding.org)

- Promote your company's breastfeeding policy to employees. Make sure employees are aware of the policy and available resources. It's especially important to communicate policy and accommodation before employees go on family leave.

## Activities

- Provide time for breastfeeding employees to pump or breastfeed while at work.
- Provide a clean, private workspace for employees to nurse or pump breast milk.
- Let your employees know about the benefits of nursing for them, their children, and your business.

# September

Focus on: Disaster Preparedness



## Strategies

- Make a plan: Be prepared for any kind of disaster.**  
The Family Disaster Plan and Personal Survival Guide was developed by the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services to help families be prepared in the event of a disaster. **The Family Disaster Plan is a template and guide that will help you prepare for and survive a disaster.**

Learn more:

- [Review a sample Family Disaster Plan](#)

- Get a Disaster Preparedness Kit.**  
Take steps to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

Learn more:

- [Review the recommended items to include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit](#)

## Activities

- [Register your phone for AlertSanDiego.](#)
- [Download the free SD Emergency App.](#)
- Make sure you have at least a three-day supply of food and water on hand.
- Keep important documents like insurance policies, bank records, and birth certificates in a sealed, waterproof container.

# October

Focus on: Weight Management



## Strategies

- Review the basics of weight management with your employees. Healthy weight involves healthy eating, regular physical activity, and balancing the number of calories consumed and the number the body uses.
  
- Combine physical activity and nutrition into one coordinated approach. Look for ways to combine activities and support, such as nutrition education, aerobic and strength training, goal setting, building lifestyle skills, self-help materials, and group exercise sessions.

Learn more:

- [Help employees stay in control of their weight](#)

## Activities

- Provide employees resources to assess their weight.
- Discuss the ways workers can improve their eating habits.
- Encourage employees to be more physically active during the work day (e.g., taking brisk walks before or after eating lunch).
- Make sure that healthy food and beverage options are available to employees, such as in vending machines.

# November

Focus on: Quitting Smoking



## Strategies

Make your workplace 100% tobacco-free.  
Promote policies that reduce tobacco use and non-smokers' contact with secondhand smoke at work.

Help your employees quit smoking today.  
Check with your insurance provider to learn about programs available to your employees. You can also distribute resources in your workplace to help them quit.

Update your policies prohibiting or restricting tobacco use to include all electronic smoking devices.

Learn more:

- [California Smokers' Helpline \(1-800-NO-BUTTS\)](#)
- [American Cancer Society sample policies and more](#)

## Activities

- Observe Great American Smokeout Day (3rd Thursday in November and always the Thursday before Thanksgiving).
- Recognize employees who have quit smoking or celebrate quit anniversaries.
- Make quit kits available to employees.



# December

Focus on: Financial Stress



## Strategies

- Emphasize prevention of financial problems  
Encourage employees to access money management programs that are often free or extremely low-cost.

Learn more:

- Visit [2-1-1 San Diego](#) or call 2-1-1 to connect with community resources through a free, 24/7 phone service and searchable online database.

- Encourage employees to make every dollar count.

Learn more:

- [Making Every Dollar Count](#) for tips on budgeting, setting financial goals, and more. Available online in both English and Spanish.



Did you know?

Over 3/4 of the U.S. workforce (76%) list money as a significant cause of stress.

*Source: American Psychological Association*

## Activities

- Take advantage of seasonal opportunities to share financial education resources with employees, such as during the holidays or tax season.
- Provide employees with a Sample Household Budget (see [Appendix 12](#)) so they can keep monthly expenses organized.

# Ongoing Activities

Make promoting health a priority.



## Strategies

- Stay up-to-date with available resources for your employees. Continue to collect resources that promote prevention and heart health.

Learn more:

- Check out the **LIVEWELL @ WORK** [Resource Library](#) for information, materials and tools that employers and employees can reference and distribute to create and/or enhance their organization's worksite wellness program.
- Browse the [UCSD LIVEWELL @ WORK Calendar of Events](#) for upcoming activities, events and screenings.
- Check the list of national and local awareness events and activities by month on the next page of this action plan.

- Continue to track your success. Ask your insurance provider for quarterly reports on employee usage of preventive services.

# Annual Calendar

January • Family Fit Lifestyle Month

February • Love Your Heart  
• National American Heart Month  
• Wear Red Day (Women's Heart Disease Awareness)

March • National Nutrition Month

April • Alcohol Awareness Month  
• National Walking Day  
• National Minority Health Month  
• World Health Day

May • National Physical Fitness and Sports Month  
• Global Employee Health and Fitness Month  
• American Stroke Month  
• National High Blood Pressure Education Month  
• Bike to Work Month  
• Mental Health Awareness Month  
• World No Tobacco Day

June • National CPR & AED Awareness Week  
• National Safety Month  
• Men's Health Month

July • National Minority Mental Health Month

August • National Breastfeeding Month  
• World Breastfeeding Week  
• National Immunization Awareness Month

September • San Diego Heart Walk  
• Healthy Aging® Month  
• National Cholesterol Education Month  
• Fruits and Veggies—More Matters Month  
• National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month  
• World Heart Day

October • Health Literacy Month  
• National Health Education Week

November • National Eating Healthy Day  
• Great American Smokeout  
• American Diabetes Month  
• Lung Cancer Awareness Month  
• National Family Health History Day

December • National Influenza Vaccination Week