

# Employers Missing Opportunities to Encourage Wellness in the Workplace



According to the 2011 National Wellness Survey Canadian employers consider work-related stress the most important health risk facing their employees (56%) and 72% of employers reported offering at least one specific wellness initiative intended to improve employee health or well-being.

Employee wellness initiatives can be excellent tools to improve employee health, build morale, retain and attract employees. However not every employer is providing employee an effective slate of wellness programs in their organization.

**We recently asked: To what extent does your organization encourage employee wellness?**

**Our results showed that 38% of you offer no wellness initiatives. What you told us was:**

- We have an onsite fitness centre or we offer employees gym memberships. (10%)
- We offer an array of benefits, including gym memberships/fitness centre, nutrition counselling, wellness seminars, and more. (19%)
- We offer many of the benefits listed above and we provide incentives for healthy lifestyles. (10%)
- We take the approach that employee health is a personal matter and don't get involved. (38%)
- Other (23%)

**2 types of simple health and wellness initiatives you can offer in your workplace**

## **1) Information and Resources**

The Government of Canada, Provincial Ministry of Health offices, Regional health offices, local wellness institutes and even health insurance providers often provide information and tips you can share with your employees, saving you the time to create materials yourself. Try the "Healthy Canadians" Website and you will find information, tips sheets and ideas for activities you can bring into your workplace.

## **2) Create a Monthly Schedule of Workplace Initiatives**

Select one day or a week a month to celebrate or recognize a health and wellness initiative. Consider variations of these 3 common examples

- 1) **Healthy Eating** – a week when all junk food is ‘banned’ in the workplace and you supply healthy food for your employees on the last day of the initiative
- 2) **Fitness Challenge** – A week where you ask employees to track their physical fitness activities and award the employee with the most ‘activity points’ a small reward such as a \$20 gift certificate at a fitness store.
- 3) **Stress Management Awareness** – Bring a speaker in to talk to your employees about identifying and managing stress.

Other examples include:

1. A Week of Walking Challenge
2. Meditation and Mindfulness Day
3. Heart Health Activities Day
4. Try a New Sport or Activity Week
5. Volunteer in the Community Month
6. Commuter Challenge Contest

In the 2010 Sun Life Canadian Health Index Report, 60% of Canadians indicated they believed that employers have some responsibility in helping employees achieve better health. It is important for both employers and employees to work together for the health of their workplace. Employee wellness initiatives can be fun and useful tools to create a positive and healthy workplace. Start today and involve your employees in the process of identifying and participating in important health and wellness initiatives.

### **Resources for your Workplace**

[Healthy Canadians Government of Canada Website](#) and on Facebook [HealthyCanadians](#)

[Tips to Get Active Information Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Data Sources

[2010 Sun Life Canadian Health Index Report](#)

[National Wellness Survey 2011](#) (Buffet and Company Worksite Wellness Inc.)