Healthi Choices

HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT WORK

Healthy people are happier, more sociable and more productive at work according to research. But what defines being healthy? Health and wellbeing refer to a state of the body where there is an absence of disease, both physical and mental. Thus, being healthy means that you feel good in body and mind, making you more likely to be motivated in your work day, to cope better with stress and to have a stronger immune system.

Employees are a company's biggest assets. Through its employees a company functions and thrives. If employees are performing at an optimal level, productivity, morale and ultimately profitability increase. When employees are sick, tired, disinterested in their work or dealing with negative stress, then productivity decreases, absenteeism increases and safety may even be compromised in some arenas.

Absenteeism impacts directly on the company bottom-line. Co-workers who are at work may have to work harder and for longer hours to compensate for a missing employee. If absenteeism becomes habitual (either one employee or within the company as a whole), productivity can take a serious knock, deadlines will be missed and clients inconvenienced and disappointed. This creates stress and frustration that can have an impact on the whole team.

What contributes to absenteeism?
Researchers and authors have identified common reasons why people stay away from work.

These include:
› Illness – genuinely sick
› Recurrent illness – may be lifestyle-related (including obesity and smoking)
› Injury – falls, broken bones, sprains, car accidents
› Stress and burnout – unable to cope, anxiety, physical symptoms of stress
› Sleep disorders – insomnia, sleep apnoea (self or a partner)

› Low workplace morale - not feeling valued or being treated with respect
› Lack of motivation and/or laziness – bored with the job or too lazy to go to work
› Personal problems – relationship issues, childcare problems, problems with elderly parents
› Bereavement – passing of a loved one
› Neck and back issues – pain and discomfort
› Bullying and harassment – avoidance of difficult situations where one or more co-workers may be involved
› Depression and other mental health issues
› Substance abuse and dependency – alcohol hangover, need for substances etc.
› Transport problems – sometimes an excuse, sometimes a genuine problem in South Africa owing to strikes, poor vehicle road-worthiness, cable theft etc.

Wellbeing programmes can help to address absenteeism
The aim of a good and properly executed company health and wellbeing programme is to improve the physical and mental health of employees to help prevent disease.

Programmes can be tailored to suit the specific needs of the company and its employees. A survey or study on the reasons for absenteeism within that company is a good place to start in providing programmes that work to reduce absenteeism within the organisation.

BECOME A **WELLBEING CHAMPION**

Here are some ways that a health and wellbeing programme can improve the wellbeing of employees:

› A screening programme for cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose levels to alert employees that they need to take their health more seriously.

› Education programmes to highlight the benefits of healthy eating.

› Tips and guidelines on what a healthy diet is and how to make changes to one's diet.

› 'Quit smoking' programmes to guide and support employees through the process of giving up smoking.

› A flu vaccine programme before flu season, including education on how to treat a cold or flu to ensure they recover more quickly by getting rest and eating a nutritious diet.

› Educate workers on the negatives of presenteeism (working while ill) which also impacts on productivity and spreads illness between co-workers.

› Provide flexibility to mothers who are breastfeeding infants by allowing them time off to express milk.

› Flexible working hours can also help to cut down absenteeism which may be caused by difficulties with childcare or help in the home.

› A company fitness programme can encourage employees to lose weight and improve their BMIs. Incentives and challenges can further motivate employees to get serious about weightloss programmes and fitness.

› Better fitness and stronger muscles can reduce the instances of back injuries.

› Provide training for managers to recognise the signs of negative stress, burnout or disengagement in team members and how to address them in a timely manner. This may include informal or formal referrals to the employee wellbeing programme.

› Provide education on ergonomics to avoid musculoskeletal injuries caused by improper posture at a desk.

› Highlight the importance of taking time off to cope with stress. Some companies now also offer paid 'duvet days', mental health day, that provide employees with time off to recharge.

› Onsite grief and trauma counselling for employees who have lost a loved one or being involved in a traumatic incident.

Resources
01. *http://fortune.com/2015/10/29/happy-productivity-work/*
02. *http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/tc/office-ergonomics-using-ergonomics-at-the-workstation-to-prevent-injury#1*
03. *https://smallbusiness.com*

If you are serious about health and wellbeing in your company, consider taking the reins as a well-being champion.

You need to:

› ensure that colleagues know which programmes are on offer

› encourage colleagues to get involved with programmes and take up offers of free wellness tests and screenings

› educate and inspire colleagues to make significant health changes

› highlight the value and importance of good health

› take part in onsite exercise routines and mobilise colleagues to join in

› champion healthy eating while adapting your own diet to include healthy foods at work

› ensure that staff have a place to prepare healthy meals. The kitchen should be stocked with a microwave and fridge so meals can be safely stored and heated.

BENEFITS OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
Eating a healthy diet, getting enough exercise, maintaining a healthy weight for your height, quitting smoking and restricting alcohol use can have a number of important health benefits.

A healthy lifestyle can decrease your risk for:

› cardiovascular disease
› stroke
› type 2 diabetes
› osteoporosis and fractures
› different types of cancers
› muscle sprains and injuries
› mental illnesses such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease

A healthy lifestyle can improve or increase your:

› longevity
› mood
› flexibility and stamina
› strength and balance
› symptoms of depression and anxiety
› ability to cope with stress
› self-confidence and self-esteem

Call your employee wellbeing programme | SMS 43821 | Email: golife@healthichoices.com