



WELCOA

The Wellness Councils of America



A PRACTICAL
HANDBOOK
TO PROGRAM
PLANNING

Managing Weight

50 GREAT IDEAS
FOR
WORKING WELL

MANAGING WEIGHT



A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK TO PROGRAM PLANNING

50 GREAT IDEAS FOR WORKING WELL



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*Managing Weight
A Practical Handbook to Program Planning
50 Great Ideas for Working Well*

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*PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED BY
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PREFACE

For over a decade, The Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA) has been dedicated to building and sustaining world-class corporate wellness programs. Our staff, directors, medical advisors, and local councils have assisted hundreds of organizations in transforming their corporate cultures into health conscious, wellness-oriented environments. With over 2,000 member organizations throughout North America and 11 locally affiliated community "Wellness Councils," WELCOA is recognized as the premier resource for worksite wellness.

In our continuing efforts to build successful wellness initiatives, we are proud to introduce a new series of books titled *50 Great Ideas for Working Well*. Each book focuses on a specific health concern and provides 50 tips on how to implement programs on each topic. Many of these “in the trenches” ideas have been drawn from companies we have worked with in our continuous effort to build “well worksites.”

In this book, we have provided additional information for you to utilize in the development of your programs. Much of this information comes in the form of online technology—a fast and convenient way for you to get started. However, with the pace of today’s technology, websites can change overnight. If this does occur, don’t let it end your search, there are plenty of other options out there.

Keep in mind that these 50 great ideas are by no means an exhaustive list—these tips are meant to stimulate critical thinking and generate new ideas for your own wellness initiatives. In addition, we encourage you to send us your ideas and communicate your own successful wellness efforts.

Lastly, we would like to give a special thanks to the practioners who have contributed to these 50 great ideas. We hope that their creativity and hard work will inspire your own efforts in creating a well workplace.

*“People may doubt what you say,
but they will believe what you do.”*

—Lewis Cass

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AT A GLANCE...

- ✓ Obesity kills. Our nation's top three causes of death—heart disease, cancer, and stroke—are directly related to an overweight and obese population.¹
- ✓ Each year, more than 300,000 people, many of whom work in American businesses, will die because of issues related to obesity and physical inactivity.²
- ✓ Health care expenditures due to obesity and physical inactivity equal an estimated \$12.7 billion, including \$2.6 billion as a result of mild obesity and \$10.1 billion due to moderate to severe obesity.³
- ✓ When all is said and done, the direct and indirect costs of obesity are estimated to be in excess of \$100 billion per year.⁴
- ✓ In 1998, promotion costs for popular candy bars were \$10 to \$50 million, up to \$115 million for soft drinks, and just over a billion dollars for the McDonald's restaurant chain. Conversely, The National Cancer Institute annually invests \$1 million in its campaign to promote fruits and vegetables.⁵

“No diet will remove all the fat from your body because the brain is entirely fat. Without a brain you might look good, but all you could do is run for public office.”

—Covert Bailey
(fitness expert)

OBESITY...IT'S ALL AROUND US

For years, an overweight workforce was of little concern to the nation's employers. But with the dramatic increase in the number of people who are now overweight and/or obese, as well as better information quantifying both the direct and indirect costs associated with this insidious health concern, employers of all sizes are now taking notice.

In a study of over 3,000 employees of First Chicago Bank, employees who were at least 20% over ideal weight had health care costs (based on medical claims) 50% greater than employees of normal weight.⁶

Additionally, in a study of over 17,000 members of an HMO, those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 35 kg/m² used more medication and had 2 times the medication costs of non-obese people (BMI 20-25 kg/m²).⁷

Think your company's not affected? Think again.

Statistically, if there are 100 people in your company or department...⁸

- 1 uses cocaine
- 50 feel they're under moderate stress
- 10 are heavy drinkers
- 30 smoke
- 60 sit all day to do their work**
- 27 have cardiovascular disease**
- 10 have high blood pressure**
- 5 have diagnosed diabetes**
- 5 have undiagnosed diabetes**
- 25 or more have high blood cholesterol**
- 35 are overweight by 20% or more**
- 50 don't wear their safety belts regularly
- 7 use marijuana

Promoting weight management in the workplace is not easy, but it can be done. When construction manufacturer Caterpillar saw medical expenses increasing at double-digit rates in the early 1990s, they took notice. When healthcare costs were projected to exceed \$1 billion in the years to come, they took action. Caterpillar got aggressive and created the Healthy BalanceSM Program.⁹

After identifying overweight as their #1 preventable health risk, Caterpillar took the appropriate steps by providing healthy foods in cafeterias and vending machines, holding on-site exercise classes, and giving reimbursements for fitness clubs. At the start of the program, more than 60% of eligible participants were classified overweight with a BMI greater than 25. Since implementation, 4,700 employees have lost weight, and medical expenses have lowered for program participants compared to non-participants. Savings in medical expenses are anticipated to surpass \$700 million by 2015, showing that shedding the pounds can pack on the savings.⁹

HIGH DOLLAR LOSS!

In lieu of sound strategies, Americans have repeatedly shown a willful suspension of disbelief for get-thin-quick products. Check out the statistics below.

- ✓ Consumers spend \$33 billion a year on the diet industry.¹⁰
- ✓ Americans spend \$40 million a year on gut-busters.¹¹
- ✓ Every year, about 8 million Americans sign up for weight loss programs that offer a quick and easy fix.¹²
- ✓ An estimated \$6 billion a year is spent on fraudulent diet products.¹³

“From a standpoint of promoting good health and preventing disease, weight is a major factor...all companies want healthy employees. Therefore, it makes sense for companies to try to help employees achieve desirable weights.”

—Dr. Don Gemson
Medical Director, Merrill Lynch

50 GREAT IDEAS FOR MANAGING WEIGHT



GREAT IDEA #1

Walk out on your job! A walking program is one of the best ways to get lots of employees moving. The entire business community of Kearney, NE, holds a “walk out on your job” fitness extravaganza once a year—a great start to worksite physical activity.

TAKE ACTION!

Organize an annual company walk. Not only will this raise awareness, but it will also get your company moving from top to bottom.

GREAT IDEA #2

When it's time to change, you've got to rearrange. Start by changing the contents of your vending machines. You don't have to do anything too drastic, but consider this: By simply substituting one cup of plain unbuttered popcorn for a one-ounce bag of potato chips, you save 120 calories and 8.5 grams of fat!¹⁴ Inform your employees of the “good” and “bad” food found in vending machines. Remember, it's impossible to eat healthy if you don't know what's in the snack. If you're still hungry to do more, how about moving the entire machine? Find a spot that takes a good walk to get to—this will help burn off some of the calories they consume in the process.

TAKE ACTION!

Get in touch with the contents and caloric values of the foods in your vending machines. Once you've listed them out, post the information on the vending machine itself. And while all this is going on, start looking for vendors who can provide healthy snacks that you can place along side the traditional favorites of chips and candy.