Health and Wellness Stats and Facts

DID YOU KNOW?

In today's fast paced work environment it is important for employees and employers alike to promote healthy working behaviors and surroundings. Healthy employees are more productive, have fewer absences and are less prone to work-related injury. It is therefore no surprise that in recent years, companies have put more effort into promoting healthy lifestyles among employees and reducing work-related stress, illness and injury. A survey from 2019 found that 83 percent of employers believed their company's wellness program had a positive impact on worker's health, while 84 percent believed such programs had a positive impact on productivity and performance.

Unsurprisingly, work-related physical injury occurs most commonly in professions dealing with heavy machinery and requiring strenuous physical activity, such as logging work, fishing, and structural iron and steel work. In 2018, there were around 5,250 deaths from occupational injury in the U.S., with the largest portion involving those aged 45 to 54 years.

While those with jobs not involving physical danger are still prone to sickness, a large portion of people still go to work even with a cold or flu. A Statista survey from 2017 found that 47 percent of those aged 18 to 30 years went to work when they were sick within the past year, compared to 38 percent of those aged 46 to 60 years. Furthermore, 58 percent of those aged 18 to 30 years took less than six sick days in the past year. Stress from work can be a major cause for absenteeism and can also impact workers productivity and lead to burn-out.

The main causes of stress at work include workload, people issues, juggling work and personal life, and a lack of job security. According to a survey from Statista, 74 percent of employees

stated they felt stressed often or sometimes, compared to 70 percent of those with management responsibility. Such information has inspired more employers to provide employees with benefits and programs to reduce stress. Popular elements of such programs include employee health screenings, health education, and supportive physical and social environments for health improvement.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce released a report titled Winning with Wellness in 2016 that not only makes the case for the business value of workplace wellness programs, but also provides guidance on running an effective one.

First, it's important to know how prevalent certain health conditions are, and why it's likely these chronic conditions are impacting your workers.

Seven facts about health and illness cited in the report:

1. More than one-third of Americans are overweight or obese.
2. As of 2012, 117 million Americans had one or more chronic illnesses, which account for 75 percent of all health care costs in the U.S.
3. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly 86 million Americans have prediabetes, and less than 10 percent of them are aware of their condition.
4. Top two chronic health conditions driving health-related costs for employers were depression and obesity, research showed.
5. Employees who scored low on "life satisfaction" stayed home from work 1.25 more days per month than those with higher scores, adding up to about 15 additional days off per year.
6. Approximately 80 percent of people are not ready to take action to change their health behaviors at any given time, according to management research.

Those numbers paint a troubling picture of poor health, chronic conditions and co-morbidities that could affect your workers'

well-being and ability to safely perform their jobs.

However, the next wellness statistic holds some good news:

7. If an individual does the following five things, they typically spend 33 percent to 50 percent less on health care costs:

   - Walking 30 minutes per day
   - Eating healthy
   - Not smoking
   - Having a waist size less than half their height
   - Drinking alcohol only in moderation

A well-designed workplace wellness program can motivate employees to make healthy choices around these five areas of health. The result could be health care savings, more engaged workers and, possibly, lower risk of injury. That's why it's important to know that many employers are investing in wellness programs and have seen positive results from their efforts to build a culture of health.

Three key statistics on wellness program popularity and effectiveness:

1. A large majority (87 percent) of employers are committed to workplace wellness, and 73 percent offer a wellness program, according to a survey. (p. 4) In our own survey of SFM policyholders, one-third of respondents offered a wellness program. This percentage went up to 77 percent for the largest employers.
2. In a survey, more than 60 percent of employers said workplace wellness programs reduced their organizations' health care costs.
3. Studies show that well-designed wellness programs have a return on investment of $1.50 to $3 per dollar spent over a two- to nine-year timeframe.