



# Using our workplaces to help us prepare for a healthier future



By Terese O'Malley, Manager Wellness Programs

**M**any of us don't associate work with improving our health and happiness. Then again maybe we should.

In fact, full time employees spend 1/3 of their lives at work. Depending on the job, a lot of that time may be sitting at our desks, in front of a computer, or for many in healthcare on our feet. With time crunches and deadlines we can forget to take breaks to de-stress, 'ground', or eat a healthy lunch. Long hours or fatigue may also keep us from an exercise regimen or hobbies and activities that help to balance the time we spend on the job.

What we may not realize is that by not paying enough attention to healthy behaviors now, during our working life, our health could be negatively affected in the future.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and cancer account for 75 percent of total healthcare costs. They are also the most preventable type of disease.

The good news is, more and more companies are acknowledging the opportunity to support a better work-life integration and offering wellness programs. We know the value of physical health such as exercise and diet and the dangers of smoking, alcohol, or substance abuse. Workplaces are now also supporting other dimensions of well-being including social, emotional, job satisfaction, and financial health.

Corporate wellness programs benefit both employees and employers. Well-being is good for people, good for organizations, and essential for building winning teams. Who doesn't want to have an 'all-star' team?

Pressing demands can make it hard to find time to quiet the mind. At times exercise can feel like a chore, and who hasn't submitted to bad food choices when time is short or we're in need of some stress reduction? With support from your employer and the convenience of programs onsite and at varying times, employees have a better chance of participating and achieving long term success. To help affect behavior changes wellness programs have developed offerings including group challenges, health coaching, friendly competition, holistic and mindfulness approaches, and other creative offerings to nudge employees toward their well-being goals.

Having a wellness program in the workplace supports business performance initiatives for employers as well, including increased employee engagement and productivity, better morale, and less stress. Companies that offer wellness programs even attract healthier talent. With employees making smart and healthy choices, companies have seen reductions in absenteeism and better control on healthcare costs.

At Marin General Hospital, our employees are enthusiastic about the Wellness @ Work program our workplace has adopted for the past several years. Not only have more and more employees adopted healthier habits and attitudes, the program earned the "SF Business Times Bay Area Healthiest Employer" award for four years in a row and the "North Bay Business Journal Healthiest Companies" twice.

Our responsibility as a hospital and healthcare institution is to expand whole person health within our community which is why

we are excited to offer the Corporate Wellness @ Work program to local businesses. The program includes education, exercise classes, health and fitness screenings, holistic services, and support from trained wellness professionals all tailored to your workforce.

Services, which employers can choose a la carte, are provided at each workplace. Depending on each employer's unique needs, offerings include screenings, "Lunch-n-Learn" presentations, coaching from a dietitian, mindfulness, fitness classes such as Zumba or stretching, wellness fairs, and challenges such as holiday weight maintenance or gratitude challenge.

Corporate wellness programs can go a long way to establish healthy changes and healthy behaviors as an investment in our future health and happiness.

For more information on Corporate Wellness @ Work, or to set up an appointment with a program representative, email: [mghwellness@maringeneral.org](mailto:mghwellness@maringeneral.org) or call us at: 1-415-925-7039.