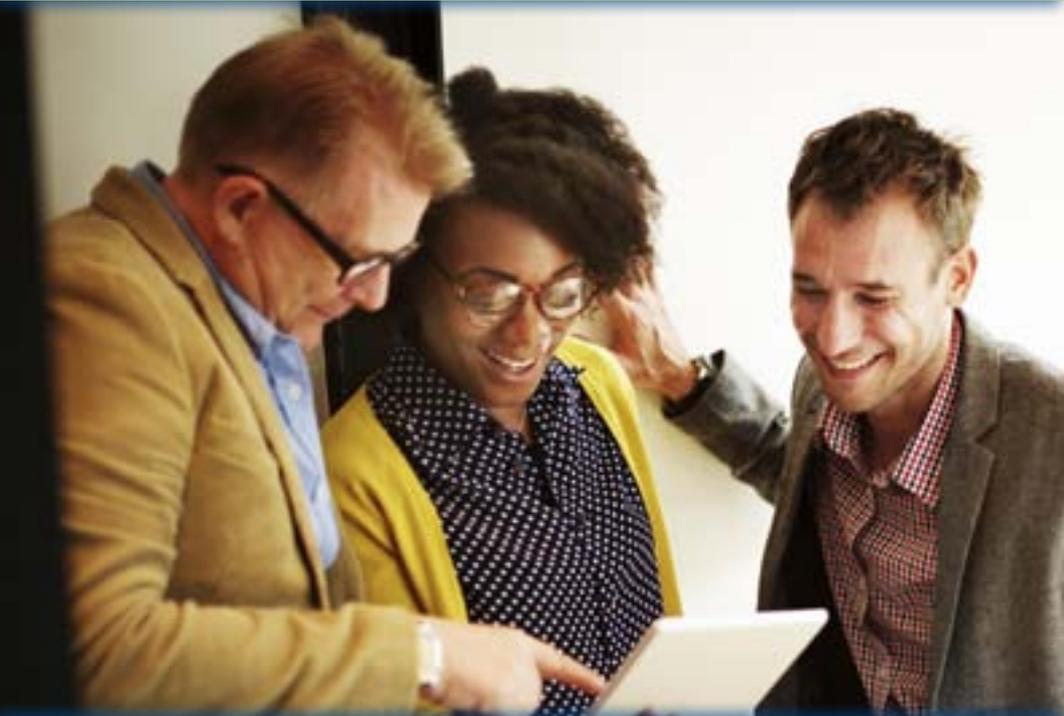


Workplace Wellness

Your guide to implementing simple and effective
wellness initiatives in the workplace.



RAMSEY
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Public Health



SAINT PAUL AREA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Wellness. What does it mean?

For us, wellness means something very simple. It means that you, as an employer, can do some **very easy, very low-cost** things to boost the health and well-being of your employees.

Wait a second, isn't wellness about doing something much more?



Maybe you want everyone in your company to run a marathon. Maybe you'd like everyone to take up going to the gym every night. And while those might be good goals, the reality is that they are unlikely to be very achievable. We don't all have the same goals and objectives in life, and no matter how healthy we might become, we all need to be comfortable with ourselves and our own wellness habits.

So this guide is about creating things you *can* do and doing things that make a difference, on day one, that are easy and low-cost to implement. We hope you try some of these ideas. Everything you need is in this small guide, from what to do to additional resources should you need them. Want to get started?

...just turn the page!

We said that wellness doesn't have to be that complicated. And to stay true to that promise we are going to tell you that wellness can be implemented, and **make a difference**, by choosing wellness initiatives from any one of the following four categories:



Tobacco Cessation

Getting your employees (and maybe you?) to reduce or stop their tobacco use.



Breastfeeding Support

Do you support your employees who breastfeed? Well, absent letting them bring their child to work every day, you may have a little work to do. Worried? Don't be, it's simple.



Healthy Eating

We spend a lot of our time at work. Is your workplace supportive and do you encourage healthy eating while at work?



Physical Activity

Maybe you already have a job that calls for you to be physically active. Good for you! But a lot of us sit most of the day and we could use some help in getting active. This category provides some good advice on getting started.

Try one, see how it goes. If you like it, try another. If it doesn't work out, then try something new. But keep trying, keep exploring, and keep finding ways to improve the physical well-being of your employees.

Tobacco Cessation

Telling someone to quit smoking is easy. Actually stopping smoking can be very hard. We all know how addictive tobacco can be. So if you are going to support your employees who want to quit, you are going to have to do some simple homework.

So what can you do?

Do you allow employees to smoke at work? Certainly not inside, but what about outside by the back door? Did you know that you can legally prohibit tobacco use not only inside, but outside and even in company vehicles? To help, we've provided a [model policy](#) and [letter to employees](#) announcing a tobacco free policy for your business. With a few simple changes you now have a policy ready to go. **It's that easy.**

Your healthcare plan or [QUITPLAN](#) likely has smoking cessation resources. Many of these are free for the employee. Make sure the information is widely available to your employees. Post the information in your break room, send it to all of your employees, and then...do it again! We all need reminders and you can help your employees by showing them that resources exist to help them quit smoking.

Research shows that over 70% of adult smokers want to quit, but without help, fewer than 5% succeed. As an employer, you can benefit from assisting your employees with their efforts to quit smoking. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that the annual cost of tobacco use to an employer averages about \$3,400 per smoker per year.



Breastfeeding Support

Many mothers choose to breast feed their babies, but for moms who return to the workforce, expressing breast milk during the day can be a bit complicated. But it doesn't have to be.

Did you know that Minnesota State Law requires that you:

- Provide reasonable breaks to an employee who needs to express breast milk for her infant child
- Make a reasonable effort to provide a room or other location where the employee can express her milk in privacy. *This can't be a toilet stall.*

Simple, right? And the answer is yes, this really is simple to do.

Have you thought about:

- Adding blinds to the windows on an office to provide privacy? *That works, is easy to do, and you can do it yourself!*
- Making sure you have space in your office refrigerator for the employee to store her breast milk. *Again, simple!*
- Making sure your team (managers and employees) know that you support working moms who breastfeed. Your support encourages new mothers and makes sure all your other employees understand what is going on.

Healthy Eating

Do your employees regularly leave the office to get food? Have you struggled to find healthy options for your employees during work? Well guess what, we all have! Unless you work in a grocery store, finding healthy options close by can be a challenge. But there some simple things you can do to make healthy choices much easier for your employees.

We know that employees are more likely to make better eating decisions when employers avoid “incenting” poor decisions. That means that if your vending machines only have unhealthy choices in terms of nutrition, your employees are going to be making unhealthy decisions simply because you haven’t given them any other options. When you provide your staff with healthy choices, and build a culture that supports healthy eating, you encourage your employees to make healthy eating decisions while they are work. Healthy eating creates healthy workers which creates healthcare savings! **It’s that simple.**

So what can you do?

Do you provide snacks for your employees? Take a look at [this list](#) of healthy choices you can provide. Sure, we all like donuts or bagels in the morning, but what about some other choices and leave the donuts for a special day (like *National Donut Day!*).



Do you have an employee cafeteria? Do you cater food for various meetings? A simple way to implement healthy eating is to have a healthy foods policy? And you can guess, if you’ve read this far...it’s easy!



Healthy Eating

Check out this [model policy](#). A healthy food policy is as simple as just defining your objectives. **Order foods that are healthy, don't order foods that are unhealthy.**

Vending machine at work?

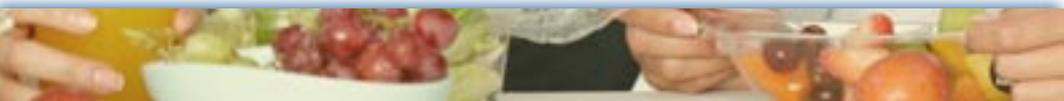
Contact your vendor to ask what their healthy options are. Many vending machines can easily incorporate refrigerated food, giving your employees the choice of sandwiches or even meals that can be heated in a microwave. Many vending machines have nothing but healthy options, so make the call and boost your healthy choices.

Do you have a refrigerator and microwave for your employees?

They are inexpensive to purchase and give your employees the ability to bring their own food to work. And microwaves allow your employees to warm up their meal (*who wants to eat cold leftovers?*).

Finally, what about your neighborhood?

Instead of telling the new employee “*Hey, the fast food place is down two blocks and then turn right.*” why not give your employees a quick list of where the local grocery stores are? Or what about the neighborhood convenience store that sells fresh fruit and juice? And if your only choices are various fast food places, take the time to print out the nutrition information that is available on their websites. Post that information where your employees can reference it to make informed choices. You are doing your part to help them!



Physical Activity

When employers provide support, programs, or incentives for employees to be active, employees are more likely to use their breaks at work for physical activity. In fact, research suggests that if you are active at work, you may transfer that activity to your at home time as well. So taking a walk while at work means that you are more likely to take walk while at home! Exercise (even a walk) contributes to healthy living, so your job as an employer is to make some simple decisions that will keep your employees active.



Start with this [Healthy Worksite checklist](#). There are lots of very easy things you can implement that cost next to nothing. The checklist will help you get started.

Meetings may be necessary, but they don't have to be stationary. Have you thought about encouraging walking meetings? Just map out a route outside or inside and walk around with your colleagues as you have your meeting. You may regret the meeting, but you won't regret the walk.

Is there a health club or other gym nearby? Did you know that many offer discount memberships to employers and their employees. Have your HR department (or you!) call them and ask. They will be happy to provide information to your employees on their options. And as a bonus, many healthcare plans offer financial incentives that reduce monthly membership fees if you go to the club or gym a certain number of times a month. You exercise...and save money!



Forming Your Wellness Committee

By now you've seen just how easy it can be to get started. But we all know that if you start something without thinking of the future, those initiatives can struggle to sustain themselves. We strongly recommend you create a Wellness Committee that will keep your company driving forward on changes, big and small, that make a difference to your employees and your company. How do you do it? Here are easy tips on getting your wellness committee up and running!

Step One: Create a team of employees who want to launch your wellness initiatives. It means more, and you will get more buy-in, when you do this as a team. The committee should have your blessing as the employer and be given the time and responsibility to get the job done. And importantly, their work isn't done just because you launched one initiative. Challenge them to think up the next initiative so you can keep the success rolling!

Step Two: Assess your current workplace. You've seen how easy wellness initiatives can be, but you will want to make sure that your initiatives meet the needs of your employees. For example, if you have very few smokers, working to convince the last few to stop smoking will only benefit just a few of your employee. In that case maybe physical activity or healthy eating might be more effective.

Step Three: When you launch your initiative, don't forget marketing! You know that your customers need some convincing, so why shouldn't your own staff? Let your wellness committee create a brand, do some fun marketing, and build the awareness and importance of wellness with your staff! Have fun and keep the excitement building.



Wellness programs are easy, they are convenient, and they are not expensive. You have a wonderful choice as an employer. Your healthy choices can become the healthy choices of everyone who works with you. How great is that? **You make simple choices and your employees benefit!**

Wellness doesn't have to be hard. There are lots of other resources out there that can help you introduce and sustain wellness programs.

Questions? Want to learn more? Give us a call and let us help you make an important difference for your entire company.

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