

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Healthy Weight and Obesity Prevention in the Workplace



What Employers can do to Include People with Disabilities

Disability and obesity are complex public health challenges, but addressing these challenges offer major dividends to our country if effective strategies are successfully applied to include the workplace.

What is Healthy Weight?

Healthy weight is the weight appropriate for a person's height and is based on a balance of calories consumed and calories used. People with disabilities may have difficulty achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. While most who are not at a healthy weight are usually overweight or obese, some are underweight. This brief addresses the issue of disability and obesity.

Considerations for Employers

- **Include people with disabilities** in programs such as informational and educational, behavioral and social, and policy and environmental strategies.
- **Ensure that worksite nutrition and physical activity programs are accessible to people with disabilities.** Promote the physical availability of healthy foods/snacks and appropriate portion sizes at worksites, including foods in vending machines, cafeterias, and at employee functions. And ensure that physical activity programs, gyms, and walking/running paths are accessible for people with disabilities who want and can use them.
- **Work more closely with state or local public health agencies** on worksite wellness programs.
- **Motivate people with disabilities to participate in worksite wellness programs** and ensure that these programs can accommodate the disability. Example incentives could include financial or other incentives to employees that may include health insurance premium reduction to employees.
- **Understand and support research** on how workplace wellness programs can improve employee health, including workers with disabilities.

Did You Know?

- Disability affects more than 56 million people in the United States.
- There are many types of disabilities, such as those that affect a person's hearing, vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, mental health, and social relationships.
- Over one-third of adults in the United States are obese, a 122% increase from 1980.
- Obesity is more widespread among people, both adults and children, with disabilities than for people without disabilities and is an important risk factor for other health conditions.
- Adults with disabilities and chronic conditions receive fewer preventative services and are in poorer health than individuals without disabilities who have similar health conditions.
- Annual health care expenditures associated with disability are estimated at \$400 billion.
- Obesity-related health care expenditures for adults are estimated at \$147 billion annually, with annual per person spending almost \$1,500 more for someone who is obese compared with someone with a healthy weight.
- The cost of obesity among U.S. full-time employees is estimated to be \$73.1 billion, according to a study which quantified the per capita cost of obesity among full-time workers by considering three factors: employee medical expenditures, lost productivity on the job due to health problems (presenteeism) and absence from work (absenteeism).

Approximately 5 million Americans with disabilities are currently employed in the United States. Health promotion programs which are accessible to all people may help reduce the rising health care costs that both employees and employers must bear through employer provided health care plans. Healthier employees can also have a positive effect on an employers' bottom line through reduced rates of absenteeism and injury and increased productivity.

CDC funds activities to evaluate physical activity and healthy weight management for people with limb loss/limb difference, paralysis, and Intellectual Disabilities.

RESEARCH:

CDC conducts research that describes rates of obesity in people with disabilities, including type of disability. Further research, testing, and evaluation could lead to developing more valid and reliable ways to accurately assess, measure, and/or reduce obesity and its related health risks among populations with disabilities.

COLLABORATION:

Public health approaches that can reach large numbers of people in multiple settings—such as child care facilities, workplaces, schools, communities, and health care facilities—can help people make healthier choices.

For more information, please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
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