

# Workplace Health Promotion

## How CDC Supports a Healthy, Competitive Workforce

Preventable chronic conditions are a major contributor to the costs of health insurance premiums and employee medical claims, which are at an all-time high and continue to rise in the United States. Four of the 10 most costly health conditions for US employers—angina pectoris (chest pain), high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart attack—are related to heart disease and stroke. In addition, work stress is the leading workplace health problem and a major occupational health risk, ranking above physical inactivity and obesity.

Chronic health conditions and unhealthy behaviors also reduce worker productivity. Five chronic diseases or risk factors—high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, physical inactivity, and obesity—cost US employers \$36.4 billion a year because of employees missing days of work.

On average, Americans who work full-time spend more than one-third of their day, 5 days a week, at their workplace. Workplace programs that promote and protect health, reduce safety risks, and help prevent disease could reach more than 157 million US workers. A healthier workforce can mean lower direct costs, such as insurance premiums and workers' compensation claims, and lower indirect costs if workers miss less work because of illness.

### Working With Employers to Set Up Effective Programs

CDC's [Workplace Health Promotion Program](#) in the Division of Population Health is at the forefront of the nation's efforts to help employers build effective, science-based workplace health programs for their employees. CDC encourages employers to use its [Workplace Health Model](#), which is a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple risk factors and health conditions at the same time.

Workplace health programs are coordinated strategies that include programs, policies, benefits, and environmental supports to keep all employees healthy and safe. They can include health education classes, access to local fitness facilities, policies that promote healthy foods or tobacco-free workplaces, and insurance coverage for preventive screenings.

### In the United States:



**4 IN 10**

of the most costly health conditions are related to heart disease and stroke.



**\$36.4 BILLION**

is lost each year from employee absences.



**157 MILLION WORKERS**

could be reached by workplace health promotion programs.





CDC focuses its efforts on small and midsize employers because 99% of US employers have fewer than 500 employees, and many lack the expertise or resources to develop effective programs. CDC supports employers by helping them assess their efforts, conducting research to identify best practices, and working with partners to train employers.

## Helping Employers Assess Their Efforts

During 2016–2017, CDC conducted the [Workplace Health in America](#) survey to assess workplace health programs across the country. Results show that 46% of US worksites have some kind of workplace health program. The most common focus of these programs is physical activity, nutrition, and stress reduction. The data from this survey can be used to develop guidelines and solutions for US employers and to evaluate progress toward meeting national health priorities. CDC also developed the [Worksite Health ScoreCard](#) to help employers assess how well they have implemented evidence-based interventions at their worksites and what more they can do to improve their workers' health.

## Conducting Research to Identify Best Practices

CDC supports research to learn what strategies are most effective in helping employers improve the health and well-being of their workers. The [CDC Workplace Health Resource Center](#) provides more than 650 tools and resources in a searchable database to help employers tailor programs to their specific workplace needs. These resources include case studies, surveys, policy templates, tool kits, and webinars.

## Working With Partners to Train Employers

[Work@Health](#)<sup>®</sup> is an employer training program designed to promote workplace wellness through employer education, training, and technical assistance. The program partners with trade associations, business coalitions, and health departments that support employer workplace health efforts. More than 700 employers have participated through online, hands-on, or combined online and hands-on training. More than 150 additional participants (employers and other organizations, such as health departments, that support workplace health efforts) have completed train-the-trainer sessions.

## Promoting Healthy Options in the Workplace

CDC's [Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity](#) works with employers to help make it easier for workers to eat healthier and actively travel to and from work. For example, CDC supports programs and policies that increase healthy options in vending machines and worksite cafeterias and help employers bring farmers' markets on-site. CDC also partners with states and communities to design streets and communities for physical activity—for example, by connecting places where people live to important locations, such as worksites, with routes for people to walk, bike, or take public transportation.

