



## Small Worksites Can Make Big Improvements to Employee Health: Heart Healthy Employees Keep Your Business on Track

### Did You Know?

Heart disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death.<sup>1</sup> High blood pressure and high cholesterol put individuals at high risk for these health conditions. You can't tell who has high blood pressure or high cholesterol just by looking at them, but about 1 of 3 US adults have high blood pressure!<sup>2</sup>

Cardiovascular disease is America's costliest disease.<sup>3</sup> Heart disease and stroke cost approximately \$330 billion each year in medical expenses and lost productivity from premature death.<sup>4,5</sup> Indirect costs—including missed workdays—cost about \$237 billion each year, including \$42 billion for high blood pressure alone.<sup>3</sup>

**On average, an employee with cardiovascular disease costs his or her employer over a week in absences and \$1,100 more on lost productivity each year than an employee without cardiovascular disease.<sup>6</sup>**

Heart-Healthy Employees have better morale, miss less work, and are more productive than less healthy employees. Fortunately, employers can help employees maintain their heart health.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

### Helping Employees Monitor Blood Pressure

*The director of the Rolling Hills Consolidated Library in St. Joseph, Missouri decided that it was important to build a strong wellness program because many employees were age 50 or older and at an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. The program, "Health Matters," was guided by an employee committee that assessed employee health and the work environment. The committee used the assessment results to create a health improvement plan and to identify wellness strategies. For example, they provided a blood pressure monitor and tracking cards onsite so employees with high blood pressure could monitor their status while at work. Read more [here](#).*

### Employers: There Is Something You Can Do!

Employee wellness activities don't have to cost a lot. Here are three simple things you can do to improve employee health:

- **[Implement policies that prohibit workplace smoking](#)**
- **[Provide healthy foods in vending machines](#)**
- **[Implement a flextime policy](#)** so employees can take breaks for physical activity and/or health needs (e.g., blood pressure monitoring, medical appointments) during the day.

### For More Information, Visit:

- **[Workplace Health Resource Center](#)**
- **[Million Hearts Employer Action Guide](#)**
- **[Million Hearts Employer Partner Opportunities](#)**

<sup>1</sup> Kochanek KD, Murphy SL, Xu JQ, Arias E. **Mortality in the United States, 2016.** *NCHS Data Brief, no 293*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. High Blood Pressure. <https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/>. 16 February 2018. Accessed 9 March 2018.

<sup>3</sup> American Heart Association / American Stroke Association. Cardiovascular Disease: A Costly Burden for America. Projections through 2035.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin EJ, Virani SS, Callaway CW, et al. **Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2018 Update: A Report From the American Heart Association.** *Circulation*. 2018 Jan 31. doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000000558. [Epub ahead of print].

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Million Hearts: Costs and Consequences. <https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/cost-consequences.html>.

<sup>6</sup> American Heart Association / American Stroke Association. Cardiovascular Disease Costs will Exceed \$1 Trillion by 2035, Warns the American Heart Association: Nearly Half of Americans Will Develop Pre-existing CVD Conditions. 14 February 2017. <http://newsroom.heart.org/news/cardiovascular-disease-costs-will-exceed-1-trillion-by-2035-warns-the-american-heart-association>.

<sup>7</sup> Certified B Corporation. B Resource Guide: Creating an Employee Wellness Program. <https://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/toolkits/toolkits/2011/rwjf400786>.

<sup>8</sup> Linnan L, Weiner B, Graham A, Emmons K. Manager Beliefs Regarding Worksite Health Promotion Programs: Findings from the Working Healthy Project 2. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2007;Jul-Aug;21(6):521-8.

<sup>9</sup> Asay GRB, Roy K, Lang JE, Payne RL, Howard DH. **Absenteeism and Employer Costs Associated With Chronic Diseases and Health Risk Factors in the US Workforce.** *Prev Chronic Dis* 2016;13:150503.

