

Workplaces Take the Challenge

DID YOU KNOW?

An investment of \$100 per employee in health promotion programs can save up to \$500 per employee in increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, turnover, and injuries.

Only one-third or less of adults 18 years and older are physically active and many are not meeting national guidelines for healthy eating. This has implications for the health of employees, which in turn has implications for employers.

Workplaces can adopt family-friendly policies to support employees to achieve work – life balance.

Children's eating and activity choices are influenced by busy family lifestyles which affect family mealtimes, foods eaten away from home, and parents' physical activity.

Half of local Grade 1 children may not be meeting Health Canada's physical activity and nutrition guidelines and 1 in 4 do not have a healthy weight.

It makes good business sense to invest in the health of your employees. Research shows that comprehensive workplace health programs can be cost effective, can lead to sustained improvement in the health of employees, and can result in a net financial benefit to the organization.

Employers have an important role to play in supporting their employees and families to be more physically active and eat well. It is a challenge to fit healthy eating and activity into a busy lifestyle. Corporate support for local health issues can make a meaningful contribution to the long-term health of their communities.

What Can Employers and Employees Do?

Be aware
*of the benefits of
physical activity and
healthy eating*

- Tell your employer, union or workplace health and safety committee about the benefits of comprehensive workplace health programs. See the health unit website for a comprehensive workplace health model (www.simcoehealth.org).
- Include physical activity and nutrition information in newsletters, pay cheque inserts, bulletin boards or email.
- Promote employee use of the Simcoe County District Health Unit website as a reliable source of information (www.simcoehealth.org).
- Provide displays and a brochure rack with healthy lifestyle resources.
 - *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* (www.hc-sc.gc.ca)
 - *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*
 - *Walk This Way* bookmark
 - *Ready, Steady, Walk* brochure
- Sponsor guest speakers on physical activity and nutrition at lunch and learn sessions and other events.
- Plan activities to help employees learn new skills, such as a physical activity challenge.
- Offer on-site health professional counselling or incorporate this service in employee assistance programs to help employees make healthy lifestyle choices.

What Can Employers and Employees Do?

Make it easy

to eat healthy and be active every day

- Be sure that healthy workplace policies are complemented with a supportive environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice.
 - bike racks, shower facilities, accessible stairwells with prominent signage, walking routes around the workplace, and gym subsidies
 - healthier food choices in cafeterias and vending machines, point-of-purchase cafeteria information, and healthy food subsidies
- Assess workplace food preparation facilities, and provide equipment such as a refrigerator and microwave to encourage employees to bring healthy foods for meals and snacks.
- Plan activities and friendly challenges that promote healthy food choices and physical activity throughout the year including Nutrition Month (March), SummerActive (May to June) and Workplace Wellness Week (October).

Be involved

with your community to support healthy lifestyles

- Provide grants and support to local charitable organizations that work to improve the health of the community.
- Participate in or plan community activities or events that promote physical activity and healthy eating.
- Work with other businesses, schools, and community organizations to plan community events that encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- Encourage discussions on healthy lifestyle issues and practices through local business associations and chambers of commerce.
- Attend the annual Simcoe County Workplace Health Conference.

Speak out

for changes that will make your community a healthier place to live

- Assess what your business currently offers to support the health of employees and employers, and encourage the development of a comprehensive workplace health program.
- Adopt policies for healthy food choices at meetings, functions and events, and implement policies such as flexible working hours to allow time for physical activity.
- Share your workplace health success stories with others at trade and business association meetings to encourage more workplaces to adopt comprehensive workplace health programs.
- Support local community groups who are speaking out for more accessible and affordable community opportunities for physical activity and healthy food choices.
- Support chambers of commerce in lobbying politicians for the supports you need to incorporate healthy lifestyle practices into your workplace health programs.
- Contact Health Connection to arrange a consultation with the health unit about starting or improving your workplace health program.

Health Connection is your phone or web link to updates and quick answers about current public health issues that affect you and your employees. Access workplace and employee resources referred to on this fact sheet and much more. Find out about community resources and workshops to support your business bottom line, and your employees in their efforts to make healthy choices. You can speak one-to-one with a public health professional Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., or visit the health unit website.

Call or Click:

HEALTH CONNECTION

■ 721-7520 ■ 1-877-721-7520

■ www.simcoehealth.org