

Consider Physical Activity to Calm Economic Anxieties

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that adults should exercise at moderate intensity for two and a half hours (150 minutes) per week.¹ Physical activity can improve one's health, calm depression and anxiety, and positively impact an employer's bottom line.

Exercise not only improves physical health, it also has a beneficial effect on the symptoms of both depression and anxiety. So during these stressful economic times, consider exercise as one method to calm financial fear.

Regular physical activity reduces the risk for many diseases and is beneficial for people with heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. It may also reduce the risk for stroke. Physical activity helps control weight; contributes to healthy bones, and joints; reduces the risks from falls in older adults; helps relieve the pain of arthritis, and reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression. Exercise need not be strenuous, as a brisk walk on most days of the week can achieve measurable health benefits, but any increase in physical activity can mean significant health improvements for many individuals.²

Physical activity can also have a positive impact on the workplace. Regular physical activity is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits, and medications. Physically active employees tend to be healthier and are less likely to become disabled.³ Reducing the direct and indirect costs associated with physical inactivity can have a profound impact on the bottom line. A company's productivity is dependent on healthy employees.

Employers can help by lifting some of the barriers that are associated with the ability to exercise (lack of time, access to affordable fitness facilities, and a safe venue to exercise.)² Here are some strategies recommended by Healthy Workforce 2010:²

- Sponsor company fitness challenges.
- Support lunchtime walking/running clubs or company sports teams.
- Create accessible walking trails and/or bike routes.
- Provide periodic incentive programs to promote physical activity.
- Contract with health plans that offer free or reduced-cost memberships to health clubs.
- Provide clean and safe stairwells and promote their use.
- Provide facilities for workers to keep bikes secure.
- Provide worksite showers and lockers.
- Offer flexible work schedules so employees can exercise.
- Discount health insurance premiums for employees who participate in health promotion activities.

Many of these activities are easily implemented and low in cost, yet provide high impact with respect to employee morale and the overall health of a company.



How Much Is Physical Inactivity Costing Your Company?

See for yourself, using this [calculator](#) from East Carolina University.⁴ Estimate the cost of medical care, workers' compensation, and lost productivity associated with inactivity for your workplace.

References

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For The Hartford's survey, independent market research agency Opinauri, Inc. conducted an online survey polling 971 U.S. adults, aged 18-64, in February 2008. Survey data was rebalanced to a nationally representative sample of 750 U.S. adults, aged 18-64. The margin of error was +/- 3.1 percent.

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