Introduction
Risky health behaviors by employees cost a company. Changing those behaviors can save the employer money and increase the employee’s productivity. Because work gives an employee a stable setting and support system, worksite health promotion programs can have a great impact on reducing high-risk behaviors. This impact results in lower health claims cost, less absenteeism, and less short-term disability.

Health promotion programs can include:
- **Raising awareness:** Single health topics addressed in newsletters and emails.
- **Health assessments:** Screenings, health fairs, health risk appraisals.
- **Education:** Speakers or programs at lunchtime/ staff meetings.
- **Skill building:** Activity challenges, healthy cooking, CPR, stress management.
- **Interventions:** Massage, smoking cessation, and skills to help you get the most out of your doctor visit.
- **Physical environment:** Healthy items in the vending machines and cafeterias, clean air practices, ergonomics, bike racks, ex time, well-lit stairways.
- **Evaluation:** Initial needs assessment, baseline evaluation measures, ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness.

Why Offer Worksites Health Promotion?
- The typical employer spends about $8,000 a year on an employee’s health care. This includes health insurance, disability and worker’s compensation. As these costs climb, health insurance is expected to rise at least 10% per year.
- A 1999 study showed that corporations using health and productivity management programs had a return on investment (ROI) from $1.49 – $13 in benefits per dollar spent. The amount depended on the nature of the program used. (S. Aldana, American Journal of Health Promotion, 2001; 15:296-320)
- One study showed that a “stop smoking” program can save between $404 - $40,829 per employee, depending on the age and sex of the employee.
- The health benefits program at Traveler’s Company included a self-care book, a newsletter, single-topic brochures, and videotapes. The program saved the company $7.8 million in employee benefit costs, decreased doctor visits, and it reduced absenteeism by 1.2 days per employee per year. The estimated ROI was $3.40 per dollar spent.
- In 1998, the Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) reported a study of 46,026 employees from six large employers for three years. Employees with an inactive lifestyle had 10% higher costs; employees with depression had 70% higher costs.

Benefits of Worksites Health Promotion
- **Increased Productivity**
  The Canada Life Assurance Company realized a 4% increase in productivity after starting an employee fitness program.

  ![Savings Per Dollar Invested](chart)

  - **Health Care Costs**
  - **Absenteeism**
  - **Combined**

  ![Targeted Programs Reduce Risk](chart)

- **Improved Recruitment & Retention**
  In the midst of a tight labor market, health promotion programs could be a vital tool to draw new recruits.

- **Decreased Absenteeism**
  Canada Life Assurance Company’s absenteeism dropped 42% among employees in the health and fitness program.

- **Decreased Workers Comp & Disability**
  In one year, Boeing Company’s number of back injuries decreased by 34%. Six million dollars was saved by tracking injuries as they occurred.

- **Managed Healthcare Costs**
  Golden, Colorado Adolf Coors Company’s wellness programs returned $6.19 for every dollar spent.

- **Increased Job Satisfaction**
  According to employee opinion surveys conducted by the Silverstone Group, employees’ morale increased, which helped support a more creative work setting.
Association of Washington Cities:
Employee Wellness Advisory Committee
http://awcnet.org/wellness

Institute for Health and Productivity Management
www.ihpm.org

National Wellness Institute
www.nationalwellness.org

Healthy Workforce 2010
www.prevent.org/winword/Healthy_Workforce_2010_pdf.pdf

Promoting Physical Activity at the Workplace: A Resource Guide
Alaskans Promoting Physical Activity, DPH, CHEMS,
PO Box 110616, Juneau, AK 99811-0616
www.chems.alaska.gov/takeheart/publications.htm

HERO (Health Enhancement Research Organization)
- Nationwide group of people and organizations that promote healthy lifestyles, and in so doing reduce health care costs, improve quality of life, and enhance productivity.

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Koop National Health Awards (The Health Project)
- Awards given to programs that:
  1. improve health by reducing risks
  2. reduce health care costs
  3. document effectiveness

- Past Koop Award winners:
  1. Union Pacific Rail Road, “Project Health Track 2001”
  3. San Jose Fire Department, “Wellness Program 1999”

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Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA)
- Sponsors the “Well Workplace Awards” for organizations working to promote the health of their employees.

- Past Well Workplace Award winners:
  1. Nebraska Methodist College, 2001
  2. Pfizer Inc., 2001
  3. Newport Hospital, 2001

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