

## WORKFORCE HEALTH

# Making wellness work for your small business

If you feel like you don't have the time or resources to encourage health and wellness at the workplace, you're not alone. Among small business owners, 93% say the health of their employees is important to their bottom line – yet only 22% actually offer wellness resources.<sup>1</sup>

In a small company, just one sick employee can have an immediate ripple effect on your operation. Other employees have to work harder to keep things on track – plus they're now at risk of getting sick, too. There's also the potential for short- or long-term disability and workers' compensation claims. Introducing workplace wellness not only shows employees that you care about their health and well-being, it also helps protect your business.

## Barriers to workplace wellness

Lack of budget, little free time for staff support, and fear of intruding on the personal space of employees can all seem like barriers when it comes to workplace wellness. But to get started, all you really have to do is create a culture of health. What does that mean? Simply show your employees that you support their health and wellness needs – doing so can be as simple and informal as you want it to be.

## Start creating a culture of health

Here are a few ways you can start building a culture of health without a big investment in time or funds:

- **Take advantage of free resources.** There are plenty of online wellness program toolkits and resources available to you at no cost. You can find Kaiser Permanente's workforce health resources, which include step-by-step toolkits and communication tools, at [kp.org/workforcehealth](https://kp.org/workforcehealth).



### Poor health by the numbers

## \$4,237

Average annual cost of obesity per employee. Includes covered medical, short-term disability, workers' comp, and sick days for obese employees (compared to normal weight employees).<sup>2</sup>

## \$5,816

Average annual cost to employers per smoker. Includes absenteeism, lost productivity, smoke breaks, and excess medical costs.<sup>3</sup>

- ▶ **Look for easy changes.** Hand sanitizers in and around high-traffic areas (think bathrooms, conference rooms, and kitchens), group walk breaks, and healthy potluck lunches all can work to improve health, relieve stress, and boost morale.
- ▶ **Get employee input.** While not everyone will participate in your efforts, some employees will not only take advantage, they'll become your biggest wellness champions – leading by example and encouraging everyone to be their best.



Visit [kp.org/workforcehealth](http://kp.org/workforcehealth) for more ideas on how to easily promote better health in your workplace.

<sup>1</sup> "Workplace Wellness Programs in Small Business: Impacting the Bottom Line," National Small Business Association and Humana, September 27, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Van Nuys, PhD, et al., "The Association Between Employee Obesity and Employer Costs: Evidence From a Panel of U.S. Employers," *American Journal of Health Promotion*, May/June 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Micah Berman et al., "Estimating the Cost of a Smoking Employee," *tobaccocontrol.bmj.com*, June 3, 2013.

Information may have changed since publication.

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