**Focus on Prevention in Employee Wellness**

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm) (CDC), as of 2012, about half of all adults – 117 million people – had one or more chronic health conditions, and one in four adults had two or more chronic health conditions. These chronic diseases and conditions – including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, arthritis, and certain types of cancer – are some of the most common, deadliest, and costly health issues in the United States.

The good news is many of these chronic diseases and conditions can be prevented. However, many adults don’t practice preventative behaviors to help lower their risks for these diseases. This is could be because many people are uneducated about the power of prevention or how to live a healthier lifestyle to combat these risks. One possible solution for this is developing a workplace wellness program that focuses on prevention. Focusing on the power of prevention could help educate employees on how to reduce their risk for these serious health problems before it’s too late.

Employers should view prevention as a priority for employee wellness. Not only do these chronic diseases and conditions slow down a workforce, they’re extremely costly too. In fact, the CDC states that [86%](https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm) of the nation’s $2.7 trillion annual healthcare expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions. Because many of these costs can be reduced through preventative healthcare, it’s crucial that employers emphasis prevention in their employee wellness programs.

It’s important for employees to understand that many of these chronic diseases can be prevented by making healthy lifestyle choices – such as living tobacco free, eating a nutritious diet, lowering stress levels, and [exercising regularly](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/how-much-should-you-be-exercising). Besides living a healthy lifestyle, employees should also closely monitor their health and stay up-to-date on their current health status. An effective wellness program will help employees take these preventative steps.

If your employee wellness program doesn’t currently emphasis the importance of preventative healthcare, start by including these preventative measures:

**Yearly biometric screenings.** [Biometric screenings](https://www.totalwellnesshealth.com/biometric-screening/) are one of the most important parts of a wellness program. It’s a quick health exam involving a small blood sample that can be done right in the office. These screenings provide employees with a snapshot of their current health status. Employees will gain some insight on their [key health numbers](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/key-numbers-for-heart-health) including cholesterol, blood glucose, triglycerides, body mass index (BMI), and blood pressure. Employees can use this information to learn which areas they should improve upon to help prevent chronic illness. Plus, onsite biometric screenings are easy, quick, and convenient for employees!

**Explain key health numbers.** Biometric screenings will mean nothing to employees if they don’t understand their results. This is why making sure that employees understand what their numbers mean is so important! Depending on your [biometric screening provider](https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2017/08/24/8-questions-to-ask-your-biometric-screening-company/#60624cde88a7), you might have the option to include health counseling to employees after they receive their results. If you don’t have this option, consider holding a meeting or lunch after biometric screenings are completed to explain what results mean and why these numbers are so important.

**Annual health assessments.** Health assessments are an excellent preventative tool. Employees fill out a short and simple questionnaire about their current lifestyle and health behaviors. The results of the health assessment help measure an employee’s risk of future health problems and illnesses. These results can be used to educate employees on the most basic factors of their health – like nutrition, physical activity, stress levels, and sleeping habits. The assessment creates a solid foundation for actionable goals and positive lifestyle changes.

**Encourage annual physicals.** While yearly onsite biometric screenings and health assessments are excellent for employee health, employers should also encourage employees to visit their doctor for an annual physical each year. Doctors and other healthcare professionals might be able to spot anything that could have been missed during a biometric screening. Employees can also speak with their doctors about any [mental health issues](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/mental_health_employee_wellness_programs) or chronic stress that sometimes can’t be detected by a quick health screening.

**Host flu shot clinics.** Believe it or not, [flu shots](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/having-doubts-about-getting-this-years-flu-shot-heres-why-you-shouldnt) are a big part of preventive healthcare! Without an onsite flu shot clinic, your office could suffer from a major flu outbreak. With about [200,000](http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/flu-statistics) Americans hospitalized every year due to complications from the flu, an onsite flu shot clinic is nothing to skip out on. The flu shot is the number way for employees to protect themselves from the flu.

**Provide wellness education.** One of the biggest aspects of practicing preventative healthcare is living a healthy lifestyle and reducing health risk behaviors that can lead to chronic disease. Employees need to be educated on which types of behaviors increase their risk for illness, and how to adapt healthier habits instead. Employers can provide wellness education through a [wellness portal](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/10-must-haves-for-a-remarkable-wellness-portal-new-ebook), interactive health coaching sessions, and weekly blogs or emails covering topics such as heart health, stress, exercise, sleep, and diet. Employees would also benefit from lunch and learn sessions and fun wellness challenges.

Preventative healthcare isn’t just about prolonging life – it’s about improving the quality of life, too. Employers should utilize their workplace wellness programs to teach employees about the power of prevention. By providing opportunities for education, fostering a healthy work environment, and offering yearly screenings, employers can help employees take charge of their health.