



Workplace Wellness: Offering Healthy Eating Options to Employees

Wellness issues important to you – brought to you by the insurance specialists at Power Group Companies.

Full-time employees spend approximately 2,000 hours at work every year, and with these hours at the workplace typically comes inactivity, eating on the go and stressful schedules. The workplace is also where employees are most susceptible to mindless eating and stress-related eating. As an employer, you can help your employees make healthy meal and snack choices at the workplace. From healthy vending machine options to more nutritionally sound cafeteria meals, you can do your part to help promote a healthy workplace.

Offering Healthy Eating Options for Employees

Worksite health promotion is an investment in your most important asset – your employees. While you may already be contributing to your employees' health and wellness through aspects of your workplace wellness program, offering healthy food choices for your employees at the workplace is a great addition to your initiative. Employees are more likely to be on the job and performing well when they are in good physical and psychological health. Better nutrition in the workplace not only helps raise productivity, it can reduce sick days and decrease the number of on-the-job accidents. Serving unhealthy food at staff lunches or offering high-fat and sugar-filled choices in vending machines or your employee cafeteria is detrimental to your wellness program and your employees' health.

Healthy eating has proven to be an effective tool in slowing the growth of health care costs as well. Choosing healthier food options may reduce an employee's chances of suffering from obesity-related diseases. While you can't control what employees choose to eat, you can help steer them in the right direction by providing healthy food options.

Best Practices and Planning

Before altering your vending machine and cafeteria options, there are a few preliminary steps and best practices to consider. Take an audit of your current vending machine, cafeteria, catered events, and offerings at meetings and measure the availability of healthy options. Talk with employees to better understand the types of healthy foods that they're interested in seeing at the workplace. Meet with vending machine and cafeteria vendors to discuss increasing the availability of healthy food and drink options. These preliminary steps

take time but will set your workplace up for a successful integration of healthier food and drink options for your employees.

Access to Healthy Food and Drink Options

Make healthy food and beverages accessible in the workplace to promote more health-conscious employees. Specifically:

- Offer healthy food and drink options in vending machines and provide healthy foods during conferences, meetings and work-sponsored events.
- Consider finding a vendor that will stock your vending machines with healthy options if your current vendor does not offer such choices.
- Price unhealthy options in vending machines and the cafeteria at a higher cost than healthier alternatives.
- Provide employees with the nutrition facts of food choices from vending machines and the cafeteria. This way, employees can know the nutrition facts before buying an item.
- Provide a fast-food guide for employees outlining healthy and unhealthy options when they must grab lunch on the go.
- Provide a reusable lunch bag to encourage employees to bring lunch from home, which is generally healthier than food purchased from a restaurant.
- Provide water coolers or reusable water bottles for your employees to encourage them to drink water throughout the day.

Offering healthy food and drink options for employees is just one element to help your wellness program succeed. With proper planning and execution, your company can reap the benefits of workplace health promotion: healthier employees, reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, a boost in morale and reduced health care costs.

Contact Power Group Companies for more information about this workplace wellness program option.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.