

Wellness

ON A SHOESTRING™

10 Free Activities to Enhance Your Program

An American Institute for Preventive Medicine ToolKit



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An American Institute for Preventive Medicine White Paper

This guide is one of many programs and publications offered by the American Institute for Preventive Medicine. The goal of our products is to help individuals reduce health care costs and improve the quality of their lives.

[Click here to download our Total Wellness Catalog.](#)



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Introduction

Due to these challenging economic times and shrinking wellness products, the American Institute for Preventive Medicine has developed this white paper titled “Wellness on a Shoestring: 10 Free Activities to Enhance Your Program.” It draws from the over 350 no cost or low cost activities and resources that appear in our Wellness on a Shoestring e-book which is available for \$34. Wellness on a Shoestring is based on our over 30 years of experience in discovering many inexpensive, but effective approaches to improve employee/member health. Our goal is to help wellness coordinators and benefits managers’ budgets go further.

[Click here if you wish to order the complete Wellness on a Shoestring e-book.](#)



1. Engage employees and their family members in designing materials that promote wellness.

- Hold a monthly poster design contest and award prizes for ones selected to be used at the worksite. Include employees and their children.
- Display posters that employees and their children designed in company newsletters. (Include their names if they agree. Get signed release forms, as needed.)



2. Give recognition to employees who make efforts to do healthy activities.

- Have the employee's supervisor or the CEO of the company send the employee a congratulatory letter. Put a copy of the letter in the employee's permanent file. Mail a recognition letter about employee's accomplished healthy behavior to the employee's family.
- Give the employee a sticker or other reward. For example, place a gold star paperweight with an engraved message, such as, "I ate a healthy lunch today," or "I am getting more fit" on an employee's desk or in their work station.
- Have employees do a "relay" activity of passing a "wellness reward" to another employee who displays a healthy behavior. Use a button, trophy, baton, medal on a ribbon, etc. with an appropriate message, such as, "Wellness in Progress!" or "I Work at Being Fit."
- List names of employees who follow healthy behaviors on company bulletin boards, in company newsletters, on the company Web site, etc.



3. Promote Walking

- Have “Wear Your Shoes/Sneakers Day” one or more days a week.
- Map out miles on or around worksite grounds. Designate 1, 3, 5, or any number of miles. You can also map out 1,000 to 10,000 steps. The following web sites can help you do this:
 - www.mapmyruns.com
 - <http://www.trails.com/googlemap.aspx>
 - www.gmap-pedometer.com
 - www.mapwalk.com
 - www.walkjogrun.net
- Design/hand out walking maps.
- Provide a list and maps of break time walks that work best with the employees’ schedule and work tasks.
- Repair and maintain outdoor and indoor walking surfaces (sidewalks and walking paths) at the worksite.
- Illustrate walking paths with signs; feet decals on floors; or directional arrows.
- Offer flexible work and lunch hours to increase the likelihood of physical activity before, during, and after work hours.
- Organize a company walking club.

4. Provide worksite resources, education, and reminders to help keep employees from getting sick with the flu.

- Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
 - Provide easy access to running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners.
 - Educate and remind employees to wash their hands often.
 - Provide education and reminders to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Also, provide easy access to tissues and trash cans.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact.
- Set and communicate worksite policies for steps to take when an employee is sick.
- Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu. Consider offering seasonal flu vaccinations onsite.
- Get more information for worksite flu prevention and planning for flu outbreaks from www.flu.gov.





5. Show Me the Numbers

List nutrition information (at least calories) for cafeteria offerings. Also, list the required number of minutes of walking, stair climbing, and/or biking to burn off the number of calories per food item.

You can download some food cards from: http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/resources/go-fish_color.pdf. Get information on calories and nutrition information from: <http://fnic.nal.usda.gov>. Click on “Look Up Calories of Nutrients in a Food.”



6. Discuss the possibility with company and building management to have the elevators run at a slow pace. This will encourage using the stairs to get to another floor more quickly.

7. Sit less at work.

- Conduct meetings and training sessions while walking or standing instead of sitting, during the entire time or at least part of the time.
- Take a stretch break during the morning and afternoon and during meetings. Put stretching exercises on magnets, mouse pads, posters, etc.
- Provide standing-height tables in the cafeteria and break rooms for lunch and breaks, especially for persons who mostly sit at work.
- For a day (or a week), assign one or more parking places *farther* away from the building with a sign, “Fit employee of the day or week.” (Get employees to rethink that parking farther away and walking more is a healthy behavior worth of recognition.) Also reward the employee(s) with a sticker, free piece of fruit, free healthy lunch, etc.



8. Sit & Relax

Have a room or area for employees to sit in a comfortable and relaxing setting. Consider having:

- Reclining chairs, such as Lazy Boy and Barcolounger.
- Chairs that give vibrating massages.
- Rocking chairs.
- Relaxing music that employees could also listen to with or without headphones.
- A mural of a beach or other relaxing scene on a wall.

9. Plan and print a company cookbook.

- Give paper copies or e-mail information for healthy recipe ingredients and substitutions. Have employees volunteer to take one of their favorite recipes, substitute the healthy ingredients, make the item and bring it in for a potluck or taste fest luncheon.
- The company cookbook could be an annual project; a seasonal project, such as ones for spring, summer, fall, and winter; or one related to holidays.
- Cookbooks could be developed by type: Heart Healthy; Meals in Less than Thirty Minutes; Ethnic-Based; etc.
- Employees can vote for their favorite recipes. These recipes can have stars or “employee favorite” ratings in the cookbook.



10. Set up a fitness center within your budget.

- Assign space for it within the worksite that can accommodate employees' needs.
- Ask for employee volunteers or assign an employee to head a group of employees to scout for used, but functional exercise equipment, such as stationary bicycles, treadmills, and other workout gear. Places to check include garage and yard sales, local newspaper ads, sports-related resale shops, and E-bay.
- Purchase inexpensive equipment, such as jump ropes, hula-hoops, resistance stretch bands, step aerobic steps, dumbbells, basketballs, volleyballs and net, etc.
- Ask employees to donate equipment they no longer use. On or near the equipment, put a “This _____ (type of equipment) was donated by _____ (employee name) for your usage.” This gives recognition to the employee.
- Contact local fitness centers to ask for a donation of one or more of their “used” fitness machines to allow employees to ‘test drive it.’ Prominently display a “donated by” sign on or near the equipment.