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well-being at work

The Danone Springs of Eden newsletter for the promotion of healthy habits at work

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Healthy Eating at Work



FROM THE EXPERT

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One of the most important factors in employee health is nutrition. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that adequate nourishment can raise productivity levels by 20%. So for employers who rely on the performance level of their employees for the productivity and efficiency of the company, supporting the nutrition of employees makes good sense.

A large proportion of disorders and diseases from which employees suffer are preventable. After tobacco, nutrition is the single largest modifiable factor. According to WHO, scientific evidence supports the view that alterations in diet have strong effects on health throughout a

person's lifetime. Most important, dietary adjustments not only influence present health, but may determine whether or not a person will develop such diseases as cancer, cardiovascular disease, or diabetes later in life. Thus employers who take steps to support their employees' healthy nutrition reap benefits both now and in the future.

Worksite health promotion studies have quantified the relationship between good health and increased productivity. The good news for

"Your food should be your medicine"
Hippocrates

employers is that investing in employee health and well-being provides benefits on two fronts: first, with

improved employee productivity, and secondly through reductions in healthcare costs. A recent review of the return on investment (ROI) for health promotion programs in the USA found an average ROI of \$3.14 per dollar spent.

continued on next page ➔

Present, but unaccounted for: "Presentee-ism"

While employers once worried about absenteeism and the problem of employees not showing up for work, an increasing number of workers are suffering from "presentee-ism" – when workers show up for work but are not productive.

Presentee-ism is more prevalent than absenteeism and is tougher to identify and control. It has been estimated that the average worker operates at only 65-70% of his or her potential. Staff who suffer from presentee-ism come to work but are not productive because they feel sick, are injured, stressed or distracted. They are present, but not actually 'there'. Lost productivity due to presentee-ism is on average 7.5 times greater than productivity lost to absenteeism.

Presentee-ism not only hurts employee productivity, it has a direct impact on a company's



bottom line. In the US, a recent study by one of the nation's largest health improvement service providers found that presentee-ism costs employers more than \$180 billion annually in lost productivity.

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Did you know...

...that your brain tissue consists of 85% water?

When you are not properly hydrated the brain feels the effects, with headaches, poor concentration and reduced short-term memory. Even your ability to perform arithmetic and the rapidity of your psychomotor skills can be reduced. This is due to the fact that dehydration causes the level of energy production in the brain to decrease. Studies have shown that a person's ability to concentrate progressively declines when the body is subject to a water deficiency of just 1 to 2%.

Healthy Eating at Work

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How can employers encourage healthy nutrition among their employees? Some suggestions include providing:

- healthy food in cafeterias and vending machines
- refrigerators to store and microwaves to heat meals brought from home
- water coolers or bottled water
- education and guidelines for healthy eating patterns
- consultation with a qualified nutritionist.

Tips for Healthy Eating at Work

- Don't skip meals – especially breakfast; you'll be more likely to snack on convenience foods that don't offer any nutritional value.
- Plan ahead and bring a healthy lunch and snacks from home.
- If you feel the need to snack, avoid high calorie or sugary choices, such as candy, chips, and soda; they offer no nutrients and within hours you'll be hungry again and looking for another snack! Instead try nuts, fruit, cereals, and yogurt.



According to WHO, consumption of a minimum of 600 grams of fruit and vegetables per day **can reduce the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers.**

Present, but unaccounted for: "Presentee-ism"

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Presentee-ism sufferers may have legitimate reason to be absent, but often feel they have to go to work to be seen. They tend to believe that visibility improves their chances of keeping their job and getting a promotion in the future. In reality, they risk infecting their colleagues with their illness, or de-motivating them by their attitude and fatigue.

Solving the problem of presentee-ism isn't a clear-cut process. However, knowing that it exists in the first place and ensuring employees have work-life balance is a step towards overcoming the problem.

Sources: Healthworks Corporate

Water in Schools Essential for learning & healthy children

The Medical profession has been telling us for many years that children do not drink enough during the school day, and the resulting dehydration contributes to a number of short-term and long-term health problems.

Children have a tendency to become dehydrated more easily than adults. This is due to the fact that they have:

- A higher surface area to body mass ratio compared to adults, so are more likely to lose water by evaporation.
- Less developed sweating ability and kidney functions.
- Less sensitive thirst response.

There is clear evidence that promoting drinking water in schools both stimulates concentration and learning, and at the same time is critical as a basis of good health. In a pilot project conducted by Water UK, teachers reported that providing water to students contributed to a more settled and productive learning environment, as well as helping to instil good hydration habits.

Good hydration helps children to:

- Improve concentration and attention
- Resolve toileting problems such as wetting and constipation
- Reduce the risk of chronic disease
- Maintain a healthy weight

Obesity in children has increased significantly in the last decade, and continues to rise. The



high sugar content of soft drinks has been identified as one of the factors involved in childhood obesity. Many schools are opting to replace their vending machines with a healthier water source, and in some countries it is even required by law. Replacing soft drinks with water, which has no calories, can help in weight control. Soft drinks not only have minimal nutritional value, but may actually diminish the appetite, so that the child misses out on valuable nutrients at meal times.

Eden supports school water initiatives by providing a variety of water solutions, including coolers, point-of-use systems, and small-pack bottles.

Food and Schools Programme, the Department of Health: www.foodinschools.org
Water is Cool in School Campaign: www.wateriscoolinschool.org.uk
Maughan RJ, European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2003

COMING UP IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Water & Diet

Can water help you lose weight?

The results of the "water at work" survey

Well-being at Work

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