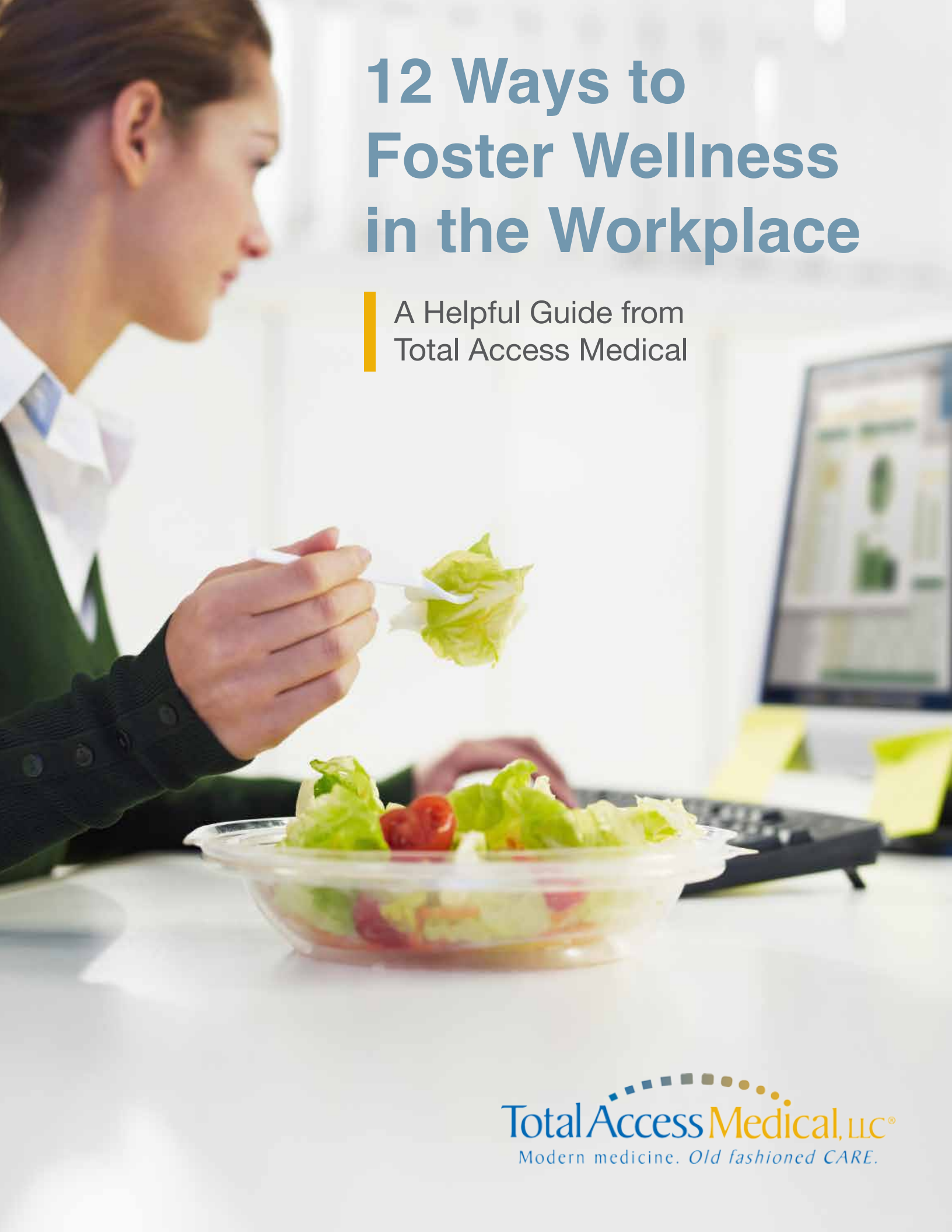


12 Ways to Foster Wellness in the Workplace

A Helpful Guide from
Total Access Medical

Total Access Medical, LLC®
Modern medicine. *Old fashioned CARE.*

INTRODUCTION

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar:

- You've been putting in 10, 12, even 16 hours at the office for the last month in order to complete a project. You're not sleeping much, and let's just say the folks at the local Chinese food restaurant know your name, location, and order by heart.
- You feel foggy around three o'clock every day, so you head to the vending machines to get something that'll perk you up. (There's nothing wrong with daily doses of Nutter Butters and Cheez-Its, right?)
- You wish you could exercise more, but between the early start at the office and the chaos at home in the late afternoon and early evenings, it's hard to squeeze in a workout.
- You constantly succumb to all the goodies your co-workers keep bringing in: doughnuts in the morning (mmm, Krispy Kreme!), employee birthday cakes (at least once a week), evil Girl Scout cookies (hey, you need to support the kids!), and endless supplies of chocolate concoctions in the weeks preceding Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter (sigh).
- You know your stress level is at an all-time high and you suspect your blood pressure isn't far behind. Or your cholesterol. And triglycerides (whatever they are).
- You wonder why people don't wash their hands after using the restroom, or after they sneeze, or after they blow their nose. Seriously, what is up with that?
- Your office feels cramped and uncomfortable, and you're convinced your desk chair is getting smaller due to pesky gremlins who come out at night and swap in a tinier, tighter seat.
- You're not that sick. You can make it through the day (cough, cough). Besides, your boss expects you to show up. (Achoo!)

Can you relate to one (or more) of these?

Maybe even all of them? You're not alone. Historically, workplace health and wellness issues have plagued organizations large and small for decades, issues that result in enormous losses for everyone. Forbes reports "U.S. workforce illness costs $576 billion annually from sick days to workers compensation."

Yep, we're talking big bucks. That said, we have been seeing a positive shift in recent years—a move towards a healthier, happier, more balanced workforce.

In July 2014, a new study came out of 1000 employers around the world: "Working Well: A Global Survey of Health Promotion and Workplace Wellness Strategies." The survey revealed important findings, such as "29% of responding organizations have a fully implemented wellness strategy"—a number that increases every year. Also this gem: "Among participating multinational employers, 56% have a global health promotion strategy, up from 34% in 2008."

This is certainly good news. As the Centers for Disease Controls notes, "Maintaining a healthier workforce can lower direct costs such as insurance premiums and worker's compensation claims. It will also positively impact many indirect costs such as absenteeism and worker productivity."

In fact, as the Incentive Research Foundation points out in a study from 2011, preventive healthcare (which includes workplace wellness programs) can result in potential savings of $1.9 trillion per year—and this doesn't even include workers' productivity gains or quality of life improvements.

So how do we maintain this positive trend and continue to turn this thing around? Strategies for improving wellness run the gamut, from formal programs funded by employers to grassroots initiatives that employees start on their own.

But where do all these wellness strategies come from? After all, you don't exactly have time to research health and wellness strategies for work, even though you know it's important. (See bulleted list up above in case you've forgotten why.)

Don't worry! That's why we're here. We've done the legwork, and you'll find our results below, presented in a readable format with plenty of tips and resources for turning each strategy into reality.



Let's get to it, shall we?

12 WAYS TO FOSTER WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

1. Stock up the kitchen with healthy snacks.

It's common for people to feel a dip in energy in the early afternoon hours. The problem is what people do to combat the energy drain. Sugary snacks might give you an initial boost, but they'll end up causing more brain fog in the end (not to mention the detrimental effects sugar has on the body). Instead, make healthy snacks available in the kitchen, such as apples, yogurt, nuts, and seeds. Simply dedicate a certain "budget" to stocking the kitchen and make it someone's job to manage it.

"Healthy" vending machines are another option—just make sure the items in the machines are actually healthy. Need to know how to get started? Here's "A Blueprint for Healthier Vending" that The Chicago Department of Public Health issued in 2013.



2. Start a lunchtime walking club.

Use a portion of employees' lunch hours for an energetic stroll around company grounds. Even 15-20 minutes of brisk walking daily can have a huge impact on your overall health, including helping to alleviate symptoms of depression, strengthening your heart, and improving cognitive function.

Offering incentives is a great way to get people to stay committed. For example, the person who logs the most "walk time" per quarter receives a gift certificate to a local sporting goods store for new sneakers.

3. Set up a nap room.

Yeah, we know what you're thinking: you want us to encourage sleeping on the job?! But hear us out. Reports suggest that midday naps for 20 minutes can rejuvenate a person and help boost productivity (not to mention making people less grumpy).

4. Communicate and educate.

Sometimes people just need regular reminders and increased awareness about health and wellness issues. Do you have regular content that goes out to employees (maybe a company-wide newsletter or something to that effect)? Consider adding a wellness section.

For example, in one issue, you could list calories of popular fast food joints AND provide healthier options people can choose from those places. In another issue, you could list calories burned by doing simple things around the office, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator or bringing trash to the Dumpster out back.

12 WAYS TO FOSTER WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

5. Offer weekly or monthly chair massages to employees.

This is a nice perk that can also help alleviate stress in areas that are prone to tension, like the neck and back. Google “corporate chair massage” and your city, and you’ll find plenty of practitioners.

6. Provide wellness workshops on topics of interest.

Take a survey and see what health and wellness topics people want to learn more about. Perhaps people want tips for easy, healthy recipes they can whip up after a long day of work. Invite a chef in who can demonstrate how to make a few easy, healthy meals. Or maybe people are curious about hypnosis. Invite a hypnotherapist in to talk about what hypnosis is, what health conditions it can help, etc.

7. During cold and flu season, make hand sanitizer readily available to employees AND encourage thorough hand washing.

Over the years, people have debated whether hand sanitizer is safe and effective. We recommend using alcohol-based hand sanitizers (avoid those with triclosan, which is a toxic chemical). WebMD recommends it as well. But keep in mind that thorough hand washing is still important.

As for the workplace, make hand sanitizer available at popular entrance points (many germs linger on doorknobs, banisters, and elevator buttons). Consider investing in pocket-sized sanitizers that people can keep on their desks. Make sure, however, that you know the active ingredients in your sanitizer, since the concentration of the alcohol is what matters (shoot for a concentration between 60 and 95 percent).



12 WAYS TO FOSTER WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

8. Encourage and support the practice of mindfulness at work.

In its article “Business Skills and Buddhist Mindfulness,” The Wall Street Journal says, “While the idea of mindfulness originates in the serious practice of meditation, B-school faculty say it has many applications for executives who aren’t looking for a spiritual fix but simply want to clear their heads and become aware of reflexive, emotional reactions that can lead to bad decisions.”

Read about Google’s take on mindfulness and General Mills’ journey into mindfulness as well. To get started on a “mindfulness mission” in your workplace, check out these resources:

A Guide to Mindfulness at Work – Forbes
Mindfulness Practices To Take Control Of Workplace Problems – Huffington Post
Lifehack Presents: The Mindfulness Meditation Mini Guide

9. Build a gym or offer gym/club memberships.

Building a gym on-site is an investment, but if you have a large organization, it’s a smart one to make. For smaller companies, offering to pay for gym or Y memberships is a great way to promote wellness.

10. Invest in ergonomic furniture.

Lower back pain is the number one cause of disability worldwide. Spending hours slumped over our desks at work certainly contributes to this startling statistic, which is why investing in furniture that helps support the back (in addition to other parts of the body) is a wise investment.



Another smart innovation to consider: walking desks. Reports show how our sedentary lifestyles and the hours we spend sitting on our posteriors at work are slowly killing us.

vaccinations for the whole staff, you can encourage improvements in the wellness of your employees. And yes—we can coordinate the all-important flu shot clinics.

12 WAYS TO FOSTER WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

11. Offer flex schedules, opportunities to work from home, volunteer days, and sick time that actually means something.

As long as the work gets done efficiently and accurately, when and where it's completed doesn't really matter, right? Consider allowing employees to create their own schedules (within reason, of course) and watch them flourish. Studies show that telecommuting and flex time decrease work-life conflict, and that's a good thing for employees and employers.

Another idea along these lines has to do with volunteering. Give employees a paid day or two a year to volunteer. Not only does this boost employee morale, but it also helps the larger community as well. A win-win for everyone.

And, finally, do NOT guilt employees into showing up for work when they're truly sick. Make this a company-wide policy and ensure that all managers enforce it.

12. Implement a formal corporate wellness program.

This is something near and dear to our hearts, since it's one of the hallmark programs we offer at Total Access Medical. You can find a wide variety of models on the market today, but our programs work like this: You can choose from plans that cater to self-insured companies, fully insured companies, and executives.

These plans offer the benefits of corporate wellness through comprehensive exams and on-call physicians to cater to the employees' needs. By coordinating yearly exams and vaccinations for the whole staff, you can encourage improvements in the wellness of your employees. And yes—we can coordinate the all-important flu shot clinics.



SOUNDS GOOD. NOW WHAT?

Now that you've read this guide, what should you do with it? Well, if you work at the executive level, you can bring it into the office and share it with your HR Director and/or anyone else you task with "Operation Workplace Wellness."

If you're a worker bee (no shame in that!), you can suggest some of the ideas to upper management or simply start implementing some on your own (e.g. the lunchtime walking club). Many of the ideas are low-cost or no cost, so they're easy for everyone to embrace as long as there's a cheerleader (you!) rallying around the idea, propping it up, and cheering it on. You can do that, right? Sure you can! We believe in you.

And if you need any assistance creating and implementing a formal corporate wellness program, we hope you'll remember to reach out to us.

Wishing you much luck and wellness as you move forward.

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ABOUT TOTAL ACCESS MEDICAL, INC.

Serving the greater Philadelphia area as well as points in New Jersey and Delaware, Total Access Medical is a concierge medical practice that brings old-fashioned care to modern medicine. Founded in 2002, TAM focuses on making quality care readily available to subscribing patients through its network of affiliated primary care physicians. Each carefully selected physician has agreed to reduce his or her current practice size to a select number of patients in order to provide devoted medical services with an old-fashioned touch. No more lengthy waiting room waits, no more delays in treatment, no more wondering if your doctor will have time for you. From holistic medicine to internal medicine, our team is ready to provide the best care possible to bring you the best possible quality of life. Visit us online or call 1-800-318-6825 to discover how concierge medicine can make a difference in your world today.

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