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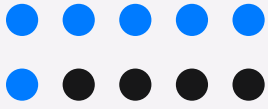
Reshaping Workforce Well-being

A case for why employers can't afford not to invest in worker wellness—and a blueprint for creating the change they seek.

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Summer 2024



6 in 10

American adults
live with at least
one chronic disease²

The health crisis of the American workforce

The health of the American worker is in crisis. As the nature of work has evolved dramatically, employee health has suffered. The last decade has been marked by a global pandemic, the explosion of social media, and shifting work environments—all of which exacerbates a sedentary lifestyle. That lifestyle is costing us.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “chronic diseases are the leading causes of illness, disability, and death in the United States. They are also the leading drivers of our nation’s \$4.1 trillion in annual healthcare costs.”¹ But what causes them? Chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and depression are influenced by a number of complex factors—genetic, environmental, individual, and societal.

Fortunately, many chronic conditions can be improved, and in some cases reversed, through a multi-pronged approach encompassing proper nutrition, sleep, stress management, preventative health screenings, and physical activity.

Today’s employers can play an important role in the health and well-being of their team members, particularly as it relates to physical activity and fostering a company culture that supports employee wellness.

In this white paper, we’ll focus on the important research milestones around exercise and health, as well as the clear connection between physical activity and metrics that matter in the workplace to employees and business leaders. In addition, we’ll highlight helpful tips for incorporating wellness into every workday, for employees and employers alike.

WORKDAY WELLNESS TIP #1:

“Just getting started on your wellness journey? Take it at your own pace. Start with short workouts, then build up to create habits over a long period of time.”

Denis Morton, Peloton Yoga and Bike instructor

1. “Health and Economic Benefits of Chronic Disease Interventions.” CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP), cdc.gov/chronicdisease/programs-impact/pop/index.htm. Accessed 5 June 2024.

Why health and exercise matter to employees

Good health allows people to engage in a higher quality of life through activities they enjoy, spending quality time with loved ones, and pursuing personal passions. They care about their health because it's intrinsically tied to their overall quality of life, both at home and in the workplace.

In a world where employed adults in the United States spend more than half of their waking hours at work or handling work-related problems and activities,² it is simple to see how work can directly affect an employee's health—and vice versa.

Various emerging work opportunities, like remote and hybrid arrangements, have allowed for greater flexibility and convenience for today's workforce. However, working remotely has engendered a more sedentary lifestyle.³

The role of exercise has never been more crucial to the health of employees' lives. From improving cardiovascular health, to disease prevention and reversal, to supporting memory and mental health, the benefits of regular physical activity at even minimal exertion levels are clear. Exercise can have a profound impact on improving employees' quality of life and overall health and wellness.

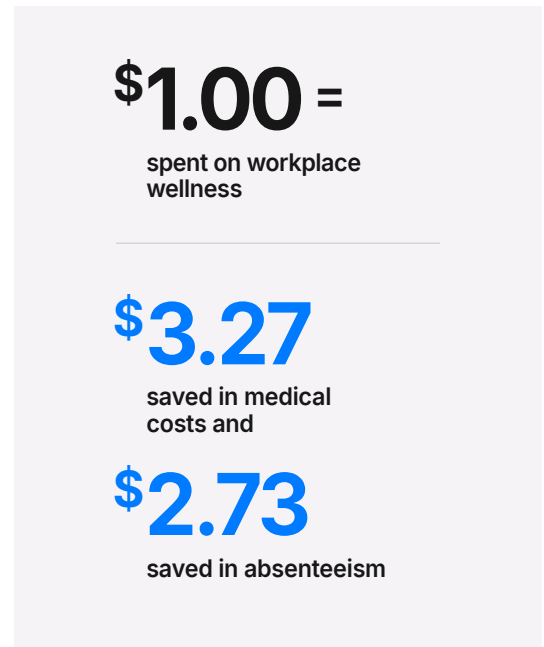
Why Employee Health Matters to Businesses

Employers can't afford not to work toward improving employee well-being. Team members are a business's most valuable resource. Helping employees to prioritize their physical and mental health is important for employers for a number of reasons, including the obvious: that it's simply the right thing to do.

WORKDAY WELLNESS TIP #2:

"Move every hour. Set a timer on your phone (don't let it interrupt meetings!) to get up. Take a moment to bend forward, stretch your hamstrings, do a squat, a lunge or two, and sit back down. It's a world of difference for your body in the long run!"

Logan Aldridge, Peloton Tread, Adaptive & Strength Instructor



When employees feel their best, both physically and mentally, they also perform better at work.⁴ A healthy individual typically has increased energy levels, improved focus, and a greater ability to manage stress.

Having a healthy team is also better for the bottom line, as there are many direct and indirect costs associated with an ailing workforce. The Kaiser Family Foundation reported that employer healthcare premiums rose by 22% over the past five years, and one in four employers plan to increase employee healthcare contributions again in the next two years.⁵ Not only do employers incur healthcare expenses related to chronic diseases, but associated short- and long-term disability claims, lost productivity, and unplanned absences can compound the negative financial impacts.

Healthier employees spend less on healthcare and take fewer sick days, which makes investing in employee wellness a smart financial decision for any business. One meta-analysis of costs and savings associated with workplace wellness programs found that for every dollar spent on such programs, medical costs fell by about \$3.27 and absenteeism costs fell by about \$2.73.⁶

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3. Patrick Wilms, Jan Schröder, Rüdiger Reer, Lorenz Scheit. "The Impact of 'Home Office' Work on Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review." *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 19 October 2022. National Library of Medicine National Center for Biotechnology Information, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9566552.

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Exercise's pivotal role in employee well-being

Exercise has myriad positive benefits for people in their personal lives as well as in the workplace. Here are a few ways physical activity impacts several dimensions of well-being:

Physical health

Exercise strengthens muscles and bones and reduces the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.⁷ It also improves cardiovascular health and boosts the immune system.⁸

Mental health

Physical activity is a well-established intervention for managing stress and anxiety. Exercise releases endorphins, the brain's feel-good neurotransmitters that act as natural mood elevators, leading to a more positive outlook and improved coping mechanisms.⁹

Cognitive function

Studies suggest that exercise can enhance cognitive function, focus, and concentration. This translates to

improved decision-making, problem-solving abilities, and overall performance. Short-term memory, long-term memory, and the ability to learn are all also enhanced significantly through exercise.¹⁰ Additionally, a study by UT Southwestern shows that older adults with mild memory loss who followed an exercise program saw increased blood flow to their brains,¹¹ which can be beneficial for brain health and may slow the onset of memory loss and dementia.

Sleep quality

Regular physical activity can greatly enhance sleep quality, leading to better energy levels, improved alertness, and increased productivity throughout the day. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recommends that adults sleep seven to nine hours at night to maintain a healthy lifestyle.¹²



WORKDAY WELLNESS TIP #3:

"Get your workout done in the morning. It energizes you more than anything.

Cue up a 15-minute workout, and it's even better than your morning cup of coffee."

Katie Wang, Peloton Row Instructor

7. Elizabeth Anderson, J. Larry Durstine. "Physical activity, exercise, and chronic diseases: A brief review." *Sports Med Health Sci.* 2019 Sep 10;1(1):3-10. doi: 10.1016/j.smhs.2019.08.006. PMID: 35782456; PMCID: PMC9219321. [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9219321](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9219321)

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How physical activity affects work performance

Exercise is not only key to an individual's health and well-being, it has also been shown to have positive outcomes at the workplace, too. Given that most adults' waking hours are spent working, recent research points to some important work-related implications of physical activity.

One study of approximately 200 employees from the UK and China captured self-reported and objective physical activity data (via a wearable smart band device), as well as self- and supervisor-reported work outcomes.¹³ The study found that daily physical activity generated a package of next-day resources, called "resource caravans," that contributed favorably to work-related outcomes. The benefits accumulated day after day.

Improved employee sleep, vigor, and task focus

The first resource immediately afforded by physical activity is quality sleep, or a person's degree of satisfaction with their daily sleep experience.¹⁴ Physical activity promotes protein synthesis and facilitates quality sleep as a homeostatic feedback process benefitting the body and brain.

The second resource gain is vigor,¹⁵ an effective resource associated with energy and vitality. The third resource gain is task focus,¹⁶ a cognitive resource that supports enhanced information processing, attention, and concentration. Across several additional studies, findings consistently demonstrated these cumulatively beneficial caravans of physical, affective, and cognitive resources contributed to next-day job performance and health outcomes.

To put it simply: **Exercise helps people sleep better, feel stronger, and gain focus—all of which lead to improved work performance.**

WORKDAY WELLNESS TIP #4:

"You can level up any part of your day. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Get after it, team!"

Matt Wilpers, Peloton Bike, Row & Tread Instructor

Workplace metrics impacted by employee exercise

As employees reap the personal benefits associated with becoming more physically active, a substantial number of workplace benefits arise as well. Employee health and wellness initiatives are advantageous to both the individuals and the employer, as employee wellness can impact a number of key business metrics.

Increased productivity: Employees who exercise regularly experience increased energy levels, improved focus, and enhanced cognitive function. This translates to higher productivity, better work quality, and a greater ability to meet deadlines.

Reduced absenteeism: Regular exercise strengthens the immune system, leading to fewer sick days and lower healthcare costs for both employees and companies. Plus, exercise can prevent many types of chronic diseases and ailments, eliminating the need for time off.

Improved morale and teamwork: Exercise programs can foster a sense of community and camaraderie among employees. Participating in group fitness activities can boost morale, team spirit, and communication.

Reduced stress levels: According to a Peloton study, 93% of people say the promise of better mental health motivates them to engage in physical activity.¹⁷ Exercise is a proven stress reliever, promoting relaxation and emotional balance, leading to a more positive and productive work environment.

13. Na Li, Y., Hayden Cheng, B., Yu, B., Zhu, J. "Let's get physical! A time-lagged examination of the motivation for daily physical activity and implications for next-day performance and health." DOI Foundation. 17 March 2023. doi.org/10.1111/peps.12585

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Implementing a new concept of workplace wellness

Workplace wellness programs have positive impacts for employers and employees alike. When building and implementing workplace wellness programs, it's important to meet people where they are, at any skill level or ability, in order to increase participation across the organization.

Two important factors to consider at this stage are motivation and community.

Strategies for motivating teams

Maintaining one's motivation to stick with an exercise program can be a challenge for any individual, particularly for employees with busy schedules and various demands on their time.

People's autonomous motivation,¹⁸ a stable individual difference reflecting the degree to which one feels self-determined to engage in a behavior, is a critical personal resource¹⁹ that can prompt individuals to engage in physical activity. Importantly, the more people consider physical activity to be fun and enjoyable rather than something to dread, the more likely they are to engage in daily physical activity.

Employers can play a proactive role in motivating employee well-being through effective workplace exercise programs. Here are some strategies:

Implement a cultural shift: Promote a company culture that prioritizes health and well-being. Organize wellness challenges and celebrate employee achievements in fitness initiatives. Encourage people managers to lead by example for their teams.

Provide incentives that matter: Motivate employees with incentives that will matter most to them. It doesn't require breaking the bank—perhaps achieving a certain workout milestone unlocks an hour off of work or a gift card.

Offer accessible home-based or on-site fitness options: Convenience is key. If employees have the opportunity to have instant access to exercise options, especially without cost, they will engage more often. Providing access to on-site fitness centers or digital fitness programming can meaningfully encourage employees to prioritize exercise.

Promote walking or running breaks: Encourage employees to take short walking breaks throughout the workday. Consider organizing walking groups or lunchtime walking challenges. Leverage an outdoor walking class for an extra dose of motivation.

Offer deskercise programs: Promote in-office exercise routines with deskercise programs that provide simple stretches and exercises employees can perform at their workstations.

WORKDAY WELLNESS TIP #5:

"Our wellbeing is dependent upon the well-being of our community. We need each other in order to be well. Each time I show up at Peloton, I'm providing a space for people to trust and to take care of themselves, and I need that too."

Chelsea Jackson Roberts, Peloton Yoga and Meditation Instructor

Leveraging the power of community

In addition to the strategies above, community can also be a powerful motivator when it comes to exercise. Some people prefer group exercise settings, and employers are uniquely positioned to foster a workplace workout community.

Employers can help their teams build connections and community through physical and wellness activities in any number of ways. Consider streaming yoga, aerobics, or meditation classes in either a virtual group setting or even in a company conference room a few times a week.

Exercise programs like these can help lead employees to a healthier lifestyle, with added benefits like fostering a sense of community and camaraderie among employees. Participating in group fitness activities can boost morale, team spirit, and communication.

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Conclusion:

Employee wellness benefits everyone

The evidence strongly supports physical activity as a key component of a healthy lifestyle for preventing and managing health conditions. The benefits of exercise span across nearly every area of health and wellness, highlighting its role as a versatile and effective intervention for improving overall well-being.

By creating a workplace culture that encourages physical activity, companies can foster a healthier, happier, and more productive workforce—resulting in a better quality of life across the board.



The Peloton benefit

Are you ready to implement an employee wellness program for your organization?

With the Peloton benefit, offer your team access to thousands of exercise and wellness classes, unique corporate engagement programming, and an inclusive, supportive community. Your employees will thank you: 90% of surveyed Members rank Peloton as one of the top three benefits their employers offer.*

Prioritize employee health and well-being with Peloton For Business. [Get started today.](#)

*June '22 study of 3,145 CW Members who worked out with Peloton at least once in the prior 60 days.



About the author

Dr. Kavita Patel, M.D., M.S., is the Medical Advisor, Peloton For Business. She is also Senior Policy Advisor at Stanford University and a practicing primary care physician. Dr. Patel has an extensive background in health and health policy, having served in the Obama administration as director of policy for the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement in the White House, and at the Brookings Institution on health care reform and physician payment. In addition, she is a Venture Partner at New Enterprise Associates where she advises health service companies, and serves on the board of several organizations in the healthcare space.

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