



Section 1: getting started

Why Worksite Wellness?

For much of the week, most Vermonters spend more than one third of their day working. The programs, policies and environments at worksites significantly influence the overall health of employees and their families throughout the life course. Worksites can also have a positive impact on the health of the communities in which they are located.

Worksite wellness strategies cover a wide range of topics, from reducing injury at work to supporting mental health. Worksites can also play an important role in helping to reduce risk factors associated with chronic conditions.

It is crucial to recognize that health is highly complex and unique to the individual. Health is, oftentimes, dependent upon factors such as one's access to nourishing food and safe spaces for movement. These are referred to as social determinants of health. Additionally, worksite wellness strategies should strive to reflect employees' cultural needs.

Worksite Wellness and the Bottom Line

Employers also benefit financially from prioritizing worksite wellness and honoring employees' health. Lost productivity, presenteeism, absenteeism and direct medical expenses are costly for employers.

- Lost productivity due to absenteeism costs employers an estimated \$1,685 per employee (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)).
- Lost productivity costs due to poor presenteeism (where employees are at work but not able to perform fully because of sickness or stress) is estimated to cost more than \$150 billion per year (Harvard Business Review).
- Employed adults miss more than 164 million hours a year due to dental issues (Surgeon General).

Worksite Wellness to Reduce Chronic Conditions

It is easier for employees to meet their personal health goals when they have a supportive work environment. However, competing priorities and limited resources can make it difficult for employers to know where to begin and how to make an impact. Focusing on improving just three risk factors can reduce the prevalence of chronic conditions and improve quality of life.

3-4-50 signifies 3 risk factors – lack of physical activity, poor diet, and tobacco use – that are associated with the development of 4 chronic conditions – cancer, heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease – that contribute to more than 50 percent of deaths in Vermont.

Together, businesses, schools, cities and towns, and health care providers can create and shape an environment that supports healthy options and makes them more accessible where Vermonters live, work, learn and play.

Worksites can take simple steps to support employee health and wellbeing. We invite you to become a 3-4-50 partner by implementing worksite wellness strategies that address chronic conditions. Visit HealthVermont.gov/3-4-50/businesses to learn more and sign-on!

