

# Toolbox Safety Talks

## Benefits of a healthy workplace

**SafeWork SA**

information > advice > support

### Talk about safety at work

Take ten minutes at 10am, or at any other time of the day, to talk with your team about workplace safety. This training resource is designed to help you deliver short presentations covering a series of work health and safety topics.

#### READ OUT

Our interest in health and wellbeing in the workplace has increased with time. Establishing a health and wellbeing program is a positive way for organisations to better manage the health of their workers.

#### What is a healthy and active workplace?

A healthy, active workplace is one that:

- values health and wellbeing
- actively encourages workers to be active
- increases opportunities to be healthy and active
- supports workers to make healthy choices
- integrates health and wellbeing practices into organisational culture and structure
- uses a wide range of strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of workers.

#### ASK THE QUESTION

**Q. What are the benefits of establishing a healthy, active workplace for both the workplace and the individual?**

#### Possible answers:

##### Benefits to workers

- *improved mental health*
- *improved physical health*
- *improved concentration*
- *improved relations with co-workers*
- *decreased health risk factors*
- *enriched lives*

##### Benefits to a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)

- *improved corporate image*
- *decreased injury rate*
- *decreased absenteeism*
- *decreased compensation claims*
- *improved productivity*
- *increased staff morale*
- *attraction and retention of workers*

## READ OUT

Studies show that a comprehensive health and wellbeing program can provide a return on investment of \$3 for every \$1 spent. Overweight, unhealthy and inactive people have an effect on work health and safety outcomes through:

- increased injury and illness
- increased injury severity, duration and medical costs
- increased absenteeism, lower productivity and work limitations
- increased musculoskeletal disorders
- workers who are less likely to remain in the workforce above 55 years of age.

### So where do we start?

A comprehensive workplace health and wellbeing program consists of more than just lunchtime physical activity classes. It can address all areas of health and wellbeing, including lifestyle choices, exercise, nutrition, mental health, smoking and substance abuse.

The key to a successful program is to address the following six areas:

1. raising awareness – education and information is the key to encouraging people to participate
2. offering participation opportunities e.g. classes at lunchtime or before/after work
3. providing facilities and environments e.g. a space for exercise
4. integrating health and wellbeing into organisation policies
5. having supportive management
6. doing regular evaluations of the strategy.

Here is a case study of a business that introduced a wellness program into its workplace.

The business had previously offered wellness initiatives but not in a structured program. This time it conducted a needs analysis to find out what people were interested in, gained the support of management and a commitment to subsidise some of the activities to encourage participation.

Some of the things they introduced were:

- starting a lunchtime walking group
- lunchtime yoga, Pilates and tai chi sessions
- starting a 'use the stairs' campaign
- healthy eating advice posters
- stress buster posters
- articles in the staff newsletter
- promotion of local events – City to Bay Fun Run, Walk to Work Day.

To provide a supportive environment, the business

- ensured that the company policy included the promotion of a healthy workplace
- put in bike racks
- provided access to stairwells for stair walking
- let staff use flexi-time to participate in programs
- offered fruit for sale at a subsidised lower price.

They worked within a budget to ensure:

- the costs for each program were known e.g. free health checks (heart, cholesterol, weight, blood sugar and lifestyle assessments)
- the costs for subsidising lunchtime activities were shared between staff and the organisation.

They promoted the motivating factors – things like feeling mentally awake, decreasing stress, getting fit, sleeping better, etc.

## READ OUT

They evaluated their results by:

- offering follow-up heart health checks to determine changes to health/fitness of staff
- following up with another needs analysis survey
- recording participation rates as evidence of the strategy's success.

The organisation considered the program a success because 60% of staff participated in an activity. Sick leave also decreased slightly. People reported that they were more productive on the days that they participated, and that they saw changes in their weight and energy levels.

## ASK THE QUESTION

**Before I finish, is there anything that we could be doing in this workplace to encourage a healthy lifestyle?**

**Take notes about suggestions** ... don't panic if there aren't any takers!

## READ OUT

OK, unless anyone has any questions, thanks for