



Workplace Health Promotion

This is a
Non - Smoking
Building

Introduction

This section seeks to give practical guidance to employers on workplace health promotion initiatives. Although it is not mandatory, investing in workplace health promotion can result in a more satisfied and healthier workforce, leading to increased productivity and reduced absenteeism.

What is health promotion?

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve the factors that affect their health.

What is workplace health promotion?

Workplace health promotion is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. Workplace health promotion goes beyond what is currently required by health and safety legislation as described elsewhere in this Toolkit.

What are the benefits of workplace health promotion?

A number of benefits are associated with workplace health promotion, including:

- Improved employee satisfaction.
- Increased productivity.
- Healthier workplace.
- Improved morale.
- Fewer absences from work.

- Reduced health risks.
- Reduced medical costs.
- Reduced staff turnover.
- Improved company profile.
- Attracts new employees.

How does workplace health promotion work?

Workplace health promotion is a mixture of company and individual initiatives. It is achieved through a combination of improving the work organisation and working environment and promoting the active participation of employees in health activities. It is focused on both the business and the individual employee.

An example would be the business managing stress from an organisational viewpoint but also assisting employees to identify and cope with stress in their lives. Workplace health promotion initiatives support individuals in acquiring healthy behaviour patterns, which will lead to an improved state of health.

What types of activity promote workplace health?

There are various types of workplace health promotion activities, including:

- Company measures to improve the working environment and enhance health, for example manual handling and display screen assessments, stress audits or a work-life balance policy.
- Education and awareness for employees about health topics such as smoking, alcohol, healthy eating, exercise, stress, heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

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- Health screening, including completion of a lifestyle questionnaire, measurement of blood pressure, cholesterol, body mass index and blood and urine tests.
- Providing healthy food options in canteens or subsidised healthy food such as fruit.
- Encouraging employees to exercise during their lunch break.
- Supporting employees to join a gym or sports club.
- Supporting employees with health insurance and GP visits.

What are the aims of a health-promoting workplace?

A health-promoting workplace aims to:

- Improve the work environment and conditions of work for all.
- Focus on health-enhancing business culture, policies and procedures.
- Focus on the health and well-being of participants.
- Raise awareness about health issues and encourage individual behavioural change.
- Use a balanced approach addressing both the work environment and the individual.

What are the key factors for successful workplace health promotion?

The following steps have been identified for successful workplace health promotion initiatives:

- Gain support from management.
- Communicate the aims to all employees.
- Establish a working group with clear terms of reference.
- Carry out a health needs assessment with employees.
- Plan and implement initiatives in response to the findings of the health needs assessment.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives.
- Integrate initiatives into the business's regular management practices.

What is the cost of workplace health promotion?

The cost of workplace health promotion initiatives varies. Some are free, for example displaying leaflets on heart disease, cancers and food intake. Some are inexpensive, for example providing fruit. Others such as health screening provided by a medical service can be relatively expensive. Obviously whatever initiative you undertake will depend on the health needs assessment and the cost of providing the service. However, the benefits to both the business and employees are worthwhile.

Contacts/References

See the HSA's website (www.hsa.ie) for copies of:

- **Workplace Health and Well-Being Strategy.**

Further information is available from:

- **Health Promotion Unit, Department Health and Children.**
Website: www.healthpromotion.ie.
- Health Promotion in the Workplace, Healthy Bodies Healthy Work.
- What's Your Portion? (leaflet).
- **Health Services Executive.**
Website: www.hse.ie.
- **Irish Heart Foundation.**
Website: www.irishheart.ie.
- What is Blood Pressure All About? (leaflet).
- Manage Your Stress for a Happy Heart (leaflet).
- **Irish Cancer Society.**
Website: www.ics.ie
- Various cancer disease leaflets.