

Checklist for a successful wellness fair

An investment in your employees' health

Good employee health is good for business. Employees who use your wellness programs can change their lifestyles and improve their health right at work.

Having a wellness fair is a great way to let employees know about your programs. These handy tips can make the wellness fair a success.

- **Make it convenient and easy to go to.** Employees are more likely to go if it fits in their schedule and it's easy to get to or a place they would go anyway, like the cafeteria. Hold the fairs during times when your employees are less busy. Take into account scheduled break times, lunch times and shift changes so as many employees as possible can go. And if you have offices in many locations, think about having smaller wellness fairs at more than one location.

- **Offer incentives.** Another way to boost attendance is to have giveaways or cash incentives. Raffle off larger, high-cost items or hand out small tokens at the door.

Participation rates increase rapidly depending on the incentive you offer, with an average of 40% to 45% possible. A moderate cash incentive of \$25 to \$75 may bring a 30% to 50% participation rate, while a significant cash incentive, \$100 to \$500, may bring as much as 70% to 80% participation.*

- **Have a variety of booths to cover a lot of wellness topics.** More than one type of booth with a lot of wellness areas will appeal to more employees. Be creative. Include the basics like nutrition, exercise, tobacco and stress, but think about local and seasonal occasions, too. For example, have a booth about outdoor safety that highlights the importance of sunscreen, bug spray and drinking plenty of fluids. Give out hiking maps and ask a park ranger to talk about hiking tips.

For smaller wellness fairs in more than one location, choose a theme for your booths and activities. Think about the needs of your employees and choose a theme that will work for most of them, such as physical activity or healthy eating.

- **Promote programs already on hand.** Let your employees know about programs through your health plan or added programs they can use. Give out fliers and ask someone from HR to answer questions. If you're promoting enrollment in an online program, have laptops at the fair for employees to enroll. Don't offer a wellness program but want to start? Use the wellness fair to survey employees and find out their interests.

- **Use and promote community resources.** Encourage employees to take part in community walks for groups like the American Cancer Society or American Heart Association. You can pass out registration forms. These groups will often give you extras to hand out at the wellness fair, such as pens or mint/gum, which you can promote as a tobacco replacement option.

Food samples from local restaurants are perfect for showing healthier menu options. Ask local restaurant managers to hand out nutrition facts and recipe tips with their restaurant name on them. Invite an athletic shoe store that specializes in fitting walkers and runners with the correct shoes. Local businesses are often eager to participate as a way to promote their services.



Sample timeline

• Six months in advance

- Get approval to hold the wellness fair and determine the budget.
- Choose the dates and locations for the event.
- Assign tasks for planning and carrying out the event.
- If you are having other services at the wellness fair, such as health screenings, therapeutic massage or flu shots, Empire BlueCross BlueShield offers access to a variety of Worksite Wellness services that are great complements to wellness fairs. Contact your Empire representative for more information.

• Three to six months in advance

- Finalize event details including booths, activities, guest speakers (including management) and agenda.
- Decide communications schedule and begin to develop messages. If you're creating signs or custom promotions, start these before you begin electronic communications.
- If you're using vendors, be sure you understand all timelines they have given you.
- Order giveaways and refreshments if applicable.

• Two to three months in advance

- Finalize communications schedule.
- Send a save-the-date note. We recommend the first communication come from senior management.
- If your wellness fair is being held outdoors, be sure you have a plan B if the weather is bad.

• Six weeks to one month in advance

- Hang posters and send any direct mail.
- Post event details on your company intranet pages.
- Start holding weekly meetings with the project team.
- Meet with security to make sure visitors who are helping with the event have access to the building.

• Three weeks in advance

- Send an email to all employees. Be sure to let them know about any incentives or prizes they can get if they attend.

• One week in advance

- Send out additional email communications. Send an email to all employees. Be sure to let them know about any incentives or prizes they can get if they attend.

Use wellness fairs for:

- Educating employees about their health.
- Health screenings or worksite wellness services, such as flu shots.
- Letting employees know about programs available to them.

