

WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Provided by The Unland Companies



Initiatives to Fight Diabetes

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Approximately 29.1 million Americans—or 9.3 percent of the population—has diabetes, and the rate of new cases continues to rise each year. Furthermore, the CDC estimates that almost one-third of people with diabetes may be undiagnosed. This is a dangerous figure, as untreated diabetes is more likely to result in costly, dangerous complications like heart disease, strokes, amputations and kidney disease.

There are two main types of diabetes:

- **Type 1 diabetes**—Previously known as juvenile diabetes, this condition is typically diagnosed in children and young adults and occurs when the body’s immune system attacks insulin-producing cells, resulting in a complete lack of insulin. Type 1 diabetes makes up only 5 percent of those with the disease.
- **Type 2 diabetes**—Occurs when the body does not produce enough insulin or cannot use insulin effectively. Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all diagnosed cases.

Each year, diabetes costs the United States approximately \$245 billion in medical expenses and lost productivity. Although type 1 diabetes can’t be prevented, type 2 diabetes, which develops slowly, can be prevented or delayed through a healthy lifestyle. Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include obesity, physical inactivity, older age and family history of diabetes. By placing an emphasis on nutrition and exercise in the workplace, employers can help reduce the frequency and effects of type 2 diabetes and improve care for those already diagnosed.



Activities and Programs

Since self-care is key to preventing and managing diabetes, it is essential that employees understand the importance of eating well, being active and monitoring their blood sugar. Here are four programs that your business can implement to reduce the impact of diabetes.

- Include questions about blood glucose screening and diabetes on your employee health survey or health risk assessment in order to help identify those who have received appropriate screening and/or are already diagnosed, setting a baseline.
 - The ADA recommends blood glucose screening for people 45 years or older, every three years. Those under age 45 should be screened if they possess certain other risk factors (for example, if they are overweight or have a family history of diabetes).
- Because healthy eating and staying active are vital components to preventing diabetes and helping people with diabetes manage their condition, implementing effective weight loss, nutrition and physical activity programs in the workplace are key to fighting the disease.
- Covering diabetes screening, counseling, disease management, medications and other treatments at low or no cost can help employees access the care they need—and pay big dividends down the road through reduced medical complications.
- Because people with diabetes are almost three times more likely to die from influenza or pneumonia, providing on-site vaccinations and educating employees on the importance of getting vaccinated may help them stay healthy through cold and flu season.

Proactive Education Can Help Reduce Costs and Save Lives

Diabetes can be extremely costly to employers, in the form of medical expenses, lost productivity, absenteeism, disability claims and loss of employees due to mortality. By encouraging your employees to get screened regularly and educating them on the importance of exercise and nutrition, employers can lower health care costs and help employees live healthier lives.