



## National Workplace Wellness Week April 5-11, 2009

### KEY STATISTICS

- Health care costs in the United States doubled from 1990 to 2001 and are expected to double again by 2012.<sup>1</sup>
- Chronic illnesses affect more than a third of working-age Americans and the costs associated with chronic diseases account for approximately 75 percent of the nation's annual health care costs.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 130 million Americans are employed across the United States and since a significant part of their day is spent at work, comprehensive, culturally sensitive health promotion within the workplace is essential to maintain and improve the nation's health.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly 60 percent of employers' after-tax profits are spent on corporate health benefits. An estimated 25-30 percent of companies' medical costs per year are spent on employees with excess health risk.<sup>4</sup> That contrasts to three decades ago when only seven percent of corporate profits paid for health costs.<sup>5</sup>
- Addressing risk factors early can make a difference. For example, \$5.6 billion in heart disease costs could be saved if one-tenth of Americans began a regular walking program.<sup>6</sup>
- Employer spending on health promotion and chronic disease prevention is a good business investment. Programs have achieved a rate of return on investment ranging from \$3 to \$15 for each dollar invested with savings realized within 12 to 18 months.<sup>7</sup>

### FACTS ABOUT WORKPLACE WELLNESS WEEK

A federal resolution creating National Workplace Wellness Week was passed by the House of Representatives on September 26, 2008 during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. H.Con.Res. 405 was sponsored by Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD) and Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA).

The resolution, which was endorsed by the American Heart Association (AHA), Chamber of Commerce, Partnership for Prevention and many other groups, designated the first full week of April as "National Workplace Wellness Week." During this week, private and public employers across the country are encouraged to invest in the health of their employees by creating worksite employee health promotion programs, or by sharing their worksite wellness experiences with other employers.



The American Heart Association believes worksite wellness programs are critical to addressing the nation's soaring healthcare costs, rising obesity rates and increasing prevalence of chronic disease. A comprehensive, culturally sensitive

program should include tobacco cessation and prevention, physical activity, stress management/reduction, early detection/screening, nutrition education, weight management, training in CPR, AED, First Aid and cardiovascular disease prevention. For more information please visit [americanheart.org/workplacewellness.org](http://americanheart.org/workplacewellness.org).

### WORKSITE WELLNESS RESOURCES

- The American Heart Association has joined with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other groups to form the first U.S. Workplace Wellness Alliance. This alliance is a broad-based national organization of businesses, health care advocates, and nonprofit organizations dedicated to the vision that a healthier workforce will result in a stronger and fiscally healthier economy. For more information about the U.S. Workplace Wellness Alliance, please visit [uswwa.org](http://uswwa.org).
- The American Heart Association's Start! initiative calls on all Americans and their employers to create a culture of physical activity and health to live longer, heart-healthy lives through walking. It offers resources for employers to implement a walking program in the workplace and track employees' progress in the program. One of Start's key components, National Start! Walking Day aims to get Americans up and moving for 30 minutes on April 8, 2009. National Start! Walking Day will take place during National Workplace Wellness Week. For more information on the Start!, please visit [startwalkingnow.org](http://startwalkingnow.org).



- Healthy People 2010 challenges individuals, communities, and professionals, indeed all of us to take specific steps to ensure that good health, as well as long life, are enjoyed by all. Learn more by visiting [healthypeople.gov](http://healthypeople.gov).

<sup>1</sup> Health Care Financing Administration. Office of the Actuary. National health expenditures projections: 2002-2012. Washington, DC. HCFA:2003.

<sup>2</sup> Villaire M., Mayer G., Low health literacy: the impact on chronic illness management. *Professional Case Management*. July/August 2007, 12(4):213-216.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson SE., Smith BA., Bybee RF., Factors influencing participation in worksite wellness programs among minority and underserved populations. *Family and Community Health*. 2005; 28(3):267-273.

<sup>4</sup> Center for Prevention and Health Services. National Business Group on Health. Washington DC. 2005. Accessed at [www.businessgrouphealth.org](http://www.businessgrouphealth.org).

<sup>5</sup> Powell DR., Characteristics of successful wellness programs. *Employee Benefits Journal*. September 1999; 15-21.

<sup>6</sup> Bulwer B. Sedentary lifestyles, physical activity and cardiovascular disease: from research to practice. *Critical Pathways in Cardiology*. 2004; 3(4): 184.

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, DR., Serxner SA., Gold DB., Conceptual framework, critical questions, and practical challenges in conducting research on the financial impact of worksite health promotion. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. May/June 2001, 15(5):281-295.