

5 Benefits of a Preventive Health Program for Employees

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), preventable chronic diseases cost US employers \$3.4 billion annually, the most expensive conditions being hypertension and cardiovascular disease.

As a result, small and large businesses worldwide have started to design healthcare policies to reduce these costs. COVID-19 has fueled this process, particularly because employees with pre-existing health conditions who contract COVID-19 lead to astronomical health insurance claims. Additionally, remote working and worldwide lockdowns lead to employees skipping regular check ups and adopting a more sedentary lifestyle.

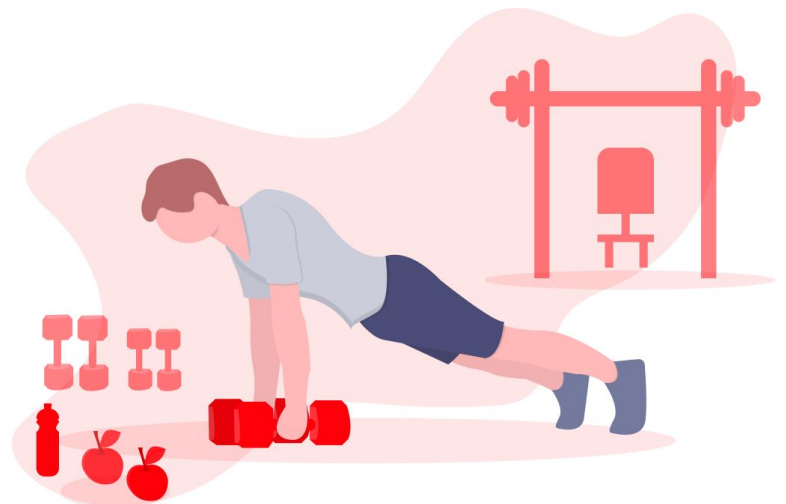
Here we want to walk you through the best ways to combat these costs through the implementation of a preventive cardiovascular health program that will equip you with the tools to build one for your business.

How do employee wellness programs reduce the burden of heart disease?

The first step to implementing a successful employee health and wellness program is identifying risk factors. Cardiovascular diseases have multiple causes that range from genetics to lifestyle choices.

Most companies focus on modifiable cardiovascular risk factors such as diet, weight, physical activity, etc. However, genetics get little attention. This is largely because it's difficult to measure genetic factors, but there's also a perception that because our genes cannot be changed, then the risk conferred by them also cannot be changed.

While we cannot alter our DNA we can identify the intensity of genetic risk and incorporate personalized, proactive changes to lower overall risk. Employees who have a higher genetic risk can be identified and encouraged to participate in health and wellness programs early on.



CardioriskSCORE by Allelica helps you achieve this through the use of a polygenic DNA test. It provides your employees with lifestyle recommendations tailored according to their risk score and allows them to track their progress. The program covers all the aspects of an effective healthcare strategy that will lead to a healthier, happier workforce with lower health insurance claims through the reduction of employee cardiovascular disease complications across the board.

The new preventive health program that provides a truly personalized assessment of heart disease risk. The test combines a range of information on an employee's current lifestyle and clinical risk factors with the very latest genetic analysis to identify their overall risk of heart disease.

An initial risk assessment is performed using information about the employee's age, sex, cholesterol levels and lifestyle, which is then combined with Allelica's polygenic risk score (PRS) for heart disease. The PRS is an assessment of an individual's genetic predisposition for heart disease and is an important risk factor to understand. Groundbreaking research has shown that without accounting for an individual's genetics, overall cardiovascular risk assessments fail to classify many people at high risk.

CardioriskSCORE provides advice and guidance for employees to track their risk of disease over time. It is a unique, personalized preventive program that empowers employees to understand and modify their risk through lifestyle, dietary and therapeutic interventions. Ultimately, the program leads to healthier, happier employees who have ownership and control over their heart health by reducing the risk of serious and debilitating, deadly cardiac events.

Why do you need a cardiovascular disease prevention program?

You cannot force employee health and wellness, but you can encourage and facilitate it. A structured healthcare program allows an employer to create a successful business by enhancing the personal effectiveness of employees.

Employees spend over 30% of their waking time at work, giving them ample time to indulge in a sedentary lifestyle or unhealthy behaviors such as smoking which are shown to lead to cardiovascular complications. They also consume at least two meals during this time, giving employers an immense opportunity to modulate employee behavior and health habits.

Implementing a preventive cardiovascular disease program allows you to use this time to your advantage and help your workers form and maintain better health trends.

What are the benefits of a preventive health program for employees?

An effective preventive health program brings the following benefits to the business:

#1 Saves Employers Excessive Health Insurance Claims Costs

Accumulating evidence suggests that employee wellness programs save money from health insurance claims, disability management, and workers' compensation.

- A 2007 study published in Sage Journal claims that preventable diseases, especially cardiovascular risk factors, account for approximately 30% of the total Medicaid expenditure annually. These numbers are in addition to the price of loss of productivity, which stands at billions of dollars. This proportion has also increased with time and is likely to continue rising in coming years. An aggressive employee health and wellness program can break this accelerating wheel.
- The study on Johnson & Johnson's Health and Wellness Program has concluded that it has demonstrated a reduction of \$225 in medical expense per employee over four years. Your employees can also gain monetary benefits from a successful healthcare campaign. For example, considering that a person spends \$5 on a cigarette pack daily, giving up smoking saves them \$1,825 per year. Not to mention the eventual costs employees may have to pay out-of-pocket for the repercussions of a cardiac event.



#2 Improves Employee Presenteeism

Presenteeism is a relatively new concept which started gaining momentum in the 1990s. Human resource professionals refer to it as a measure of on-job productivity. It is measured using the following parameters:

- Low work output
- Mistakes made on the job
- Inability to meet the demands of job description

One of the most crucial causes of presenteeism is mental or physical health conditions. High presenteeism due to chronic conditions not only reflects on the performance of the organization but carries a monetary cost to the business. Research suggests that a well-implemented healthcare program increases productivity and decreases presenteeism. For instance, a nutritious diet containing fruits, vegetables, and whole grains reduces presenteeism by 66%. Similarly, discouraging smoking improves productivity and performance. Employees also receive adequate support for their health challenges and risk factors, enabling them to maintain productivity despite advancing age.

#3 Reduces Employee Absenteeism

Unlike presenteeism, the phenomenon of absenteeism is more visible and easier to measure. It is the amount of time an employee takes off from work. The estimates suggest that absenteeism among those with cardiovascular problems can reach up to six months in an acute cardiac event like a heart attack.

A health program that detects the risk factors and addresses them can lower absenteeism. For example, this study at Duke University concluded that hourly employees experienced a reduction of five hours in absenteeism annually due to a health promotion program.

#4 Promotes Positive Mental Health

Successful employee health and wellness programs reduce health-related stresses among employees. Depression or anxiety issues due to ongoing health struggles, for example, can have a huge impact on job performance.

If employees have access to resources to monitor and actively improve their health status, they can focus on their jobs without added stress due to health concerns. Additionally, preventive programs in which employees can track their progress increases organizational dedication and motivation in the workplace.

#5 Boosts Morale And Improves Job Satisfaction

Well-run organizations are made up of employees with high job satisfaction, and wellness programs are a key strategy to achieving and maintaining job satisfaction. Implementing innovative programs dedicated to employee health demonstrate the company's compassion and concern for the health and happiness of employees. In turn, employees feel that their organization cares about them, which promotes a positivity and boosts morale.

Research on the hospitality industry concluded that employee health and wellness programs result in significantly higher job satisfaction. They cultivate loyalty among staff members and improve employee retention rates.

And since recruitment is a time and money-consuming effort, these programs also prove to be cost-effective in more ways than one.

What Are the Main Features of a Successful Employee Healthcare Program?

An effective employee health and wellness program has the following features

- Accurate & precise identification of risk factors
- Personalized, attainable strategies to lower these risk factors
- Meaningful promotion of these strategies to employees
- High employee engagement rates through effective communication
- User-friendly resources for healthy habits accessible to employees



CardioriskSCORE is an innovative cardiovascular disease prevention program which equips employees with effective, personalized strategies to reduce their lifetime risk of heart disease by leveraging the latest breakthroughs in genomics and precision medicine.

To learn more about successful strategies to reduce cardiovascular disease at your company, get in touch today.