

The Workplace and Aging:

How to Maintain the Health of
Workers as they Age Toward
Retirement and Beyond

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Participant Expectations

- Identify ways to improve and maintain health as you age; including exercise, diet, and stress reduction
- Develop strategies to make the workplace a healthier environment for workers as they move toward the end of their careers and retirement.
- Prepare to implement a program and report back about the effectiveness of your efforts

Older Worker Health Practices

- 10,000 new 55+ year olds each day
- Do our systems and facilities accommodate aging workers?
- Many older workers face a number of physical, sensory, and mental challenges in performing their work tasks.
- Older workers bring a strong work ethic and a wealth of knowledge and experience. They are the most skilled and productive employees.

Older Worker Health Practices

- Consume relatively high wages and benefits
- Health care utilization for chronic disease is high
- Reduced muscular strength, endurance, hearing, memory and reflexes might adversely affect their safety, health and performance

Older Worker Health Practices

- Older workers actually experience lower injury rates than younger workers due to the fact that they have higher skill levels, experience, and mature judgment
- If injured, older workers lose more work time and utilize more health care than younger workers.

What can employers do?

- Change the work environment
 - Design jobs to reduce heavy lifting
 - Mechanical for manual strength; reduce repetitive tasks; allow adequate recovery time
 - Provide increased lighting levels
 - Workplace ergonomics
 - Reduce physically stressful postures

What can employers do?

- Alter work arrangements and work-life balance
 - Telecommuting
 - Job sharing
 - Phased retirement
 - 3 out of 4 workers said they would prefer reduced hours gradually rather than abrupt retirement
 - Mentoring programs

What can employers do?

- Promote health
 - Incentives for disease prevention practices
 - Reduced health care insurance cost for practicing healthy behaviors
 - Provide health screenings at the workplace
 - Immunizations, blood pressure screening, smoking cessation
 - Promote healthy behaviors
 - Provide onsite exercise programs, work time release for health promotion programs (diet counseling, stress reduction classes).

What can employers do?

- In the social context
 - Van Pools for those with driving problems
 - Child care (grandchild care?)
 - Release time to care for aging spouse/parent

What can employers do?

- What are your ideas?

What can employees do?

- Practice health promoting behaviors
 - Learn about and prepare healthy meals; low in fat, low in high fructose corn syrup products; lower portion sizes;
 - Eat whole grains, fruits and vegetables as a basis for your diet. Countries with the longest living population eat a diet rich in these foods

What can employees do?

- Practice health promoting behaviors
 - Exercise regularly
 - Do 15 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on most days
 - Improve your flexibility through stretching exercises or activities such as yoga
 - Increase muscular strength by engaging in strength building activities (weight training, physical work)
 - When appropriate - walk instead of drive; climb stairs instead of using the elevator; leave your desk hourly and walk for a few minutes

Let's Exercise!

- Chin Tuck
- Shoulder Shrug
- Trunk Rotation
- Wall Stand
- Hip circles
- Leg/ankle bend and rotation
- Standing stretch

Fit Employees

- Less likely to get sick
- Have more energy
- Have more self-confidence
- Inspires greater self-confidence
- Tend to take on more leadership roles
- Set and achieve goals
- Tend to have better attitudes
- Less stressed
- Excellent team building opportunities
- Feel the employers have more concern for them

What can employees do?

- Practice health promoting behaviors
 - Reduce Stress at work
 - Don't sweat the small stuff
 - Manage your time better
 - Take a five minute break (see exercise)
 - Become a better listener
 - Fix your environment (lighting, temperature, noise)
 - Get more sleep (at home, Dagwood!)
 - Have a friend or mentor you can talk to

What can employees do?

- What are your ideas?

Worker Safety and Aging

- Accommodation
 - Locating valves in optimum position for turning
 - Providing mechanical assists whenever heavy items have to be handled
 - Installing devices so items are oriented at safe lifting heights

Worker Adaptations

- Older workers are both willing and able to learn new tasks and skills - they are generally better educated than previous generations.
- They are receptive to using new technologies if they perceive the technology as useful, easy to use, and receive adequate training and support.

Age Bias Survey

- Failure to acknowledge application or resume
- Early retirement bias
- Lack of training, development and advancement
- Over qualified
- Older workers laid off first
- Recruitment practices and demeanor
- Organization culture
- Unanimous acceptance of bias
- Company size not significant
- Not optimistic of elimination of bias
- Belief in bias = 96%; actually seen = 77%
- Employers - bias not severe and declining

Age Bias Survey

- Job seekers most negative - bias exists
 - Unemployed seeking job = 98%
 - Retired seeking job = 96%
 - Employed not management = 93%
 - Management = 92%
 - Retired not seeking job = 79%
- Recruitment
 - Prefer interview with someone their age
 - Prefer older or similar age boss
- Age Bias?
 - Actual incidents (litigation or factual accounts) are rare, yet most believe it is a wide practice
 - * Age friendly employers (retirementjobs.com)

Critical Health Priorities

- Increase use of early detection services
- Increase the use of adult immunization
- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Reduce hazards and risk factors leading to injuries
- Increase the use of disease self-management techniques

What can we do now?

- No Cost Solutions
 - Organized daily activities within the work day
- Low Cost Solutions
 - Pedometers; healthy snacks;
- Higher Cost Solutions
 - Financial incentives related to health care
 - Rewards for age related health behaviors

What will you do now?

