

## *Active Workplace Team Conversations*



### **Facilitator:**

This activity includes a team conversation guide and an accompanying handout for six health and safety topics: sedentary behavior, ergonomics and injury, stress management, physical activity, sleep hygiene, and nutrition. Supervisors use the team conversation guide to start a group discussion about health and safety in the workplace. Group discussions build a culture of health at your workplace, reinforce health practices, and help employees feel supported by their supervisors. The handouts provide information about each topic and can be distributed to employees.

This activity can be used as part of the Active Workplace toolkit or as a stand-alone tool depending on how much of the program you are implementing. The team conversation topics match the topics for the training and behavior tracking activities that are part of the Active Workplace program and work in coordination with them. If you are implementing multiple program activities, follow instructions in the Active Workplace toolkit user guide. We recommend implementing activities for one health and safety topic per month.

To implement the team conversations activity, download and print the team conversation guides and handouts. Choose the health and safety topic that is most relevant to your employees and distribute the corresponding team conversation guide and handout to supervisors and schedule times for a 15-minute meeting with their teams to deliver the information. Supervisors will distribute the handout to employees. They will then hold the conversation guide with one side facing them and the other side facing the employees, share/read the information on the page, and end with a discussion. Discussion questions are provided for each topic. Follow up with supervisors to make sure they complete the scripted team conversation.

# Total Worker Health® Discussion: Sedentary Behavior



- Both the organization and individual have a responsibility to decrease sedentary behavior in the workplace.
- Decrease sedentary behavior by utilizing **sit-stand desks and active workstations** if they are available.
- Try to get up and **move** at least once every 30 minutes.

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# Sedentary Behavior



**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about sedentary behavior in the workplace, meaning jobs with frequent and prolonged sitting. Reducing sedentary behavior in the workplace is important because sitting for long periods of time is bad for your health. Total daily sitting time is linked with increased risk of early death, diabetes, obesity, and developing heart disease. Prolonged sitting may worsen neck and back pain, cause musculoskeletal injuries, and is harmful even if you exercise regularly. Fortunately, there are many actions an individual and organization can take to reduce sedentary behavior in the workplace.

Here are some ways individuals can decrease the amount of time they are sedentary and still get work done:

- Get up and move around for at least 2 minutes every half hour.
- Utilize sit-stand desks and active workstations if they are available.
- Take walking meetings.
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Walk to a co-worker's desk to deliver a message instead of sending an email.

Now let's discuss if there are ways the organization can help reduce sedentary behavior in the workplace.

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- Are there actions we can take as an organization to support employees in decreasing sedentary behavior and moving more throughout the day?
- Are there barriers that make it difficult to use sit-stand desks or active workstations if they are available?

# Strategies to Decrease Sedentary Behavior



## Employees:

These are strategies that you can use to reduce sedentary behavior at work and improve your health. Remember, both the workplace and the individual contribute to sedentary behavior. Talk to your supervisor if you have concerns or ideas related to sedentary behavior in your workplace.

### Alter the work environment

- Use a sit-stand desk if one is available. Alternate between sitting and standing throughout the day. Try to stand for 2-4 hours per day, for 20-30 minutes at a time.
- Use an active workstation if one is available. Try to move while you work for 30-60 minutes per day.
- If your workplace has standing height tables in break rooms, stand while you eat lunch or take a break.



### Change some daily habits

- Stand while riding public transit.
- Park farther away from work to incorporate a walk to and from the office.
- Take the stairs instead of elevators or escalators.
- Take a walk to the floor above your work station every time you go to the bathroom, get coffee, or get water.
- Instead of sending an email, walk to a co-worker's desk and deliver the message face-to-face.

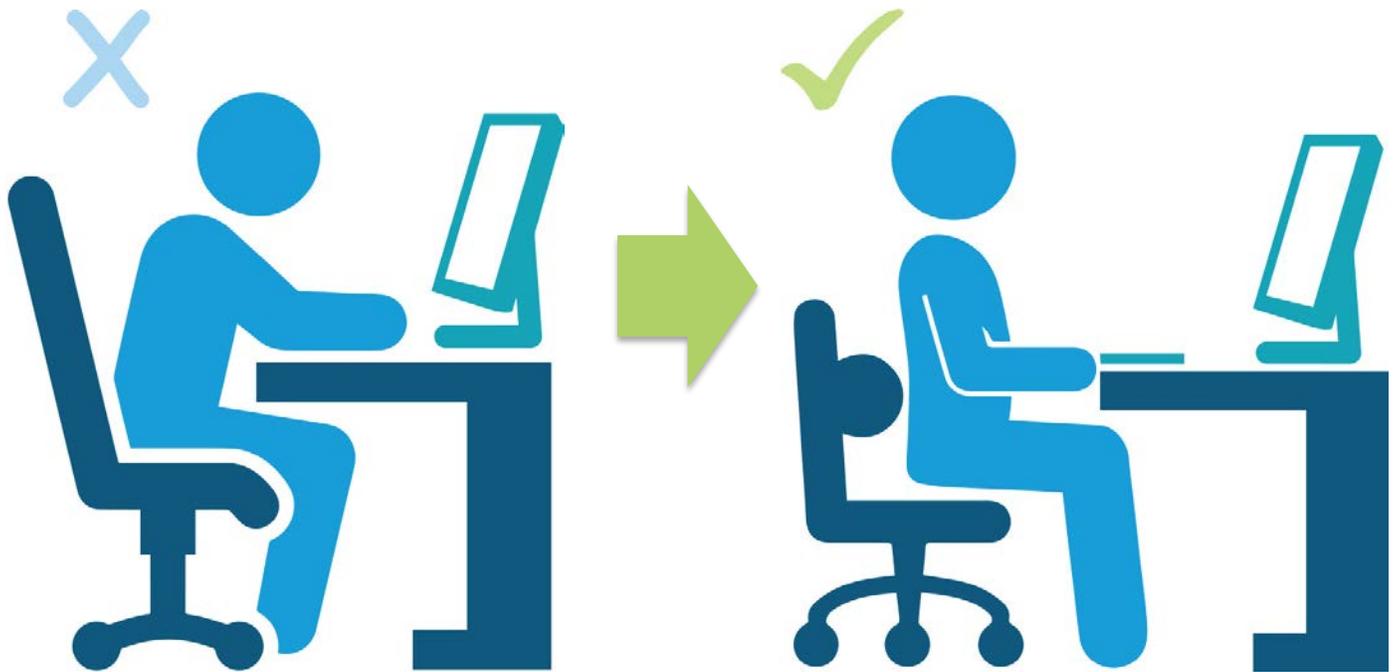


### Create a schedule to remind yourself to move

- Set an alarm on your computer or phone to remind yourself to move and use active workstations or sit/stand desks if they are available.
- It is recommended that you get up and move for at least 2 minutes every half hour.

13	14
● 9:30am Stand for 20 minu	
● 10:20am Stand and Stretc	
● 10:50am Pedal for 10 min	
20	21

# Total Worker Health<sup>®</sup> Discussion: Ergonomics & Injury



- Both the organization and individual have a responsibility to good ergonomic practices.
- **Alternate between sitting and standing** throughout the workday if a sit/stand desk is available.
- Remember to take brief **stretching breaks** at least 1x per hour throughout the workday.

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# Ergonomics & Injury



**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about ergonomics. Ergonomics is about adjusting a workspace to fit the person who works within it. Proper ergonomic setup is important because it prolongs health and prevents injury, supports high levels of productivity, and increases worker satisfaction.

There are many activities individuals can do to practice good ergonomics, including:

- Learn how to adjust your chair and desk space (see Ergonomic Checklist handout).
- Maintain a good working posture – tall spine, head and neck in-line with your torso.
- Look away from your computer monitor often to reduce eye strain.
- Alternate between sitting and standing at least 2x per hour throughout the workday if you have access to a sit/stand desk.
- Set an alarm on your phone to remind you to take a brief break to move around and stretch at least 1x every hour.

At the organizational level, employers are responsible for providing a safe workplace. Employee input and feedback is important for the organization to develop and maintain an ergonomically safe workplace. We will now begin a discussion about potential ways the organization can improve ergonomics in the workplace.

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- Are there actions we can take as an organization to improve ergonomic practices?
- Are there ergonomic risk factors that are not currently being addressed by the organization?
- What, if anything, is preventing you from practicing good ergonomics?



# Ergonomic Checklist

**Employees:** Use this checklist to adjust your workspace and remind yourself of posture recommendations. If you answer no to any of the questions, think about what actions you can take to meet the ergonomic recommendation. Remember, there is not one correct workspace arrangement that will work for everyone. In setting up your workspace, try out the recommendations below and decide what works best for you!

Workspace Set Up / Posture Recommendations	Yes	No
When sitting in your chair, are your feet flat on the floor? Use a footrest if necessary.		
Is your chair adjusted so the height of the seat pan is just below your knee caps?		
Are your chair armrests adjusted so your forearms rest comfortably when your elbows are bent at a 90 degree angle?		
Is your chair backrest adjusted so it supports your lower back?		
Are your chair, keyboard and monitor centered to each other?		
Are your elbows at the same height as your keyboard and mouse?		
Is your keyboard and mouse at a height that allows your wrists to be in line with your forearms in a neutral position?		
Is the monitor at least an arm's length away from your eyes?		
Is the top of the monitor screen at or slightly below your eye level?		
Is the monitor screen tilted up or down to minimize glare?		
Are documents supported by a document holder?		
Do you use focused lighting to enhance visibility in your workstation?		
Are the items that you use most often within a comfortable reach?		
Do you look away from the monitor screen regularly and refocus your eyes on an object 25 feet away?		
Do you maintain an erect posture: tall spine, head and neck in-line with torso?		
Are your shoulders relaxed, but not slouched?		
Do you alternate between sitting and standing at least 2x per hour throughout the workday?		
Do you take brief stretching breaks at least 1x per hour throughout the workday?		



# Desk Stretches

## Shoulder Blade Stretch

- Bend your arms forward at the elbows.
- Push your shoulders down, away from your ears.
- Gently pull your elbows back to squeeze your shoulder blades closer together.
- Feel the stretch in your upper back.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.
- Repeat the stretch 3-5 times.



## Arm Stretch

- Bend right arm behind head.
- Use left hand to further move the arm behind your head.
- Feel the stretch in your shoulder and upper arm.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.
- Repeat the stretch with your left arm.



## Chest Stretch

- Stand in a doorway and hold your arms up, placing your forearms against the frame. Make sure your elbows are at a 90-degree angle, parallel to the ground.
- Slowly walk forward until you feel a light stretch in the chest and shoulders.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.



## Neck Extension Stretch

- Start with your head squarely over your shoulders and your back straight.
- Tilt your chin up toward the ceiling and bring the base of your skull toward your back.
- Feel the stretch in the back of your neck.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.



## Side Neck Stretch

- Without moving your shoulders, move your right ear towards your right shoulder.
- Feel the stretch in the left side of your neck.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.
- Repeat to stretch the right side of your neck.
- For those who have difficulty bending their neck, rotate your head left to right instead.



## Lower Back Stretch

- Stand with your feet apart and hands on the small of your back with fingers pointing backwards.
- Bend backwards at the waist, supporting the lower back with your hands, keep your knees straight.
- Feel the stretch in your lower back.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.
- Option: Perform with back against countertop for support.



## Thigh Stretch

- While standing, pull right ankle or lower leg toward buttock.
- Make sure to keep your back straight and hold the stretch for 10-15 seconds.
- Feel the stretch in the front of your thigh.
- Repeat stretch with left leg.



## Hamstring Stretch

- Position your body with one leg forward and the toes of that foot raised up.
- Keep your back straight while you bend forward at the waist.
- Feel the stretch in the back of your thigh and knee.
- Hold for 10-15 seconds.
- Repeat the stretch 2 times for each leg.



Brief stretching breaks throughout the day can help you maintain good musculoskeletal health and stay comfortable during your workday. We recommend setting a notification on your phone once every hour, reminding you to take a brief break to move around, adjust your position, and stretch. Stretching in a standing position is preferred, but if you have difficulty standing and stretching, it's ok to stretch while sitting.

# Total Worker Health® Discussion: Stress Management



- It is important for both the organization and individual to address work-related stress.
- Work related stress can lead to serious injury and illness.
- Explore ways to lower your stress – talk to your supervisor, go for a walk, pause and prioritize.

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# Stress Management



**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about job related stress and how it can be addressed by the individual and the organization. It is important to address job related stress because stress can lead to serious injury and illness, such as cardiovascular disease and depression. Stress can also prevent you from engaging in healthy behaviors such as good sleep hygiene, healthy eating, and exercise. Stress can leave you distracted at work, resulting in decreased productivity, satisfaction, and safety.

There are several strategies for an individual to manage and reduce stress in the workplace. Here are some examples:

- Meet with your supervisor or team regularly to understand your job expectations and reduce uncertainty.
- Understand and make use of the support resources for well-being that may be available to you at work, e.g., stress management, work-life balance, or diet/exercise programs.
- Explore ways to tackle your stress with healthier alternatives: go for a walk, try count breathing or body scan exercises (see the Stress Management Strategies handout for information about these exercises), listen to music, ask for support from family, friends, or co-workers.
- Pause and prioritize: usually, not everything needs to be done right away, nor does it need to be perfect.
- Focus on the tasks you have accomplished and give yourself credit for them.

Now we will start a discussion about actions the organization and supervisors can take to reduce job related stress.

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- What are some common sources of stress at work? Are these stressors being addressed?
- How can the organization help reduce job-related stress?
- How can the organization offer support when an employee is feeling stressed?
- How can employees offer support when a co-worker is feeling stressed?





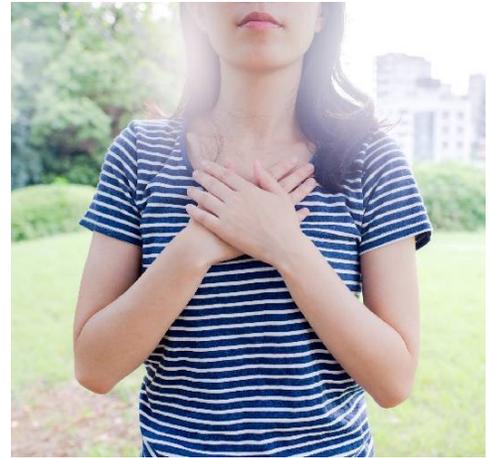
# Stress Management Strategies

**Employees:** These are intentional relaxation strategies that you can use to relax and manage stress at work. Changing the work environment at an organizational level is an important component to reduce stress in the workplace. Talk to your supervisor if you have concerns or ideas related to stress in your workplace.

## Breath Counting

During count breathing, you will take 5 deep, slow breaths and fully exhale between each breath. This exercise will only take 1-2 minutes to complete.

- On the first inhale, mentally count to 5. Exhale.
- On the second inhale, mentally count to 4. When you exhale, tell yourself 'I am more relaxed now than I was at number 5.'
- Inhale while mentally counting to 3. When you exhale, tell yourself 'I am more relaxed now than I was at number 4.'
- Continue this pattern for the remaining breaths.



## Body Scan

During a body scan, you focus attention on each part of your body in turn, starting with your head and moving down through your toes. If you feel an area with tension, focus on relaxing the muscles in that area. Breathe, acknowledge how that area of your body is feeling, relax, and continue to move attention down your body. A body scan can be done in as few as 2-3 minutes.

- Start by sitting in a chair and making yourself comfortable.
- Throughout the exercise, focus on breathing in relaxation and breathing out tension.
- Bring your attention to your head. Take note of any tension, take a deep breath, and release that tension as you exhale. Move your attention down your body repeating this process in each area.
- Move your attention to your neck; shoulders; back
- Arms; hands and fingers
- Abdomen
- Buttocks
- Upper legs; lower legs; feet and toes
- Finish the body scan by taking a deep breath and enjoying the awareness you have for your body. Prepare to continue your day with awareness, relaxation, and focus.



# Total Worker Health® Discussion: Physical Activity



- Both the organization and individual have an impact on employee physical activity.
- Try to get **150 minutes** of aerobic exercise per week.
- Utilize **active workstations**, if they are available, and **incorporate physical activity into your daily routine** to increase physical activity while at work.

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**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about physical activity. Engaging in regular physical activity is important because it can reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, help control your weight, strengthen your bones and muscles, improve your mood, allow for better quality sleep, and increase your chances of living longer.

Adults are recommended to get at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity (like brisk walking, jogging, biking, swimming, or hiking) every week along with muscle strengthening and flexibility exercises twice per week.

Here are some ways individuals can engage in regular exercise:

- Utilize active workstations while at work if they are available.
- Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. For example, bike to work, stretch at your desk while making a call or talking to a co-worker, or take a brisk walk during your lunch break.
- Make a clear goal for starting and/or maintaining an exercise routine. It may be helpful to find a family member or friend with whom to exercise so you can motivate each other to stick to your individual goals.

You do not have to be in shape or be a great athlete to exercise. If you are just starting or getting back into a regular exercise routine, go slowly and build up your activity length and intensity over time. Celebrate your progress!

There are many mechanisms through which the work organization and environment can influence how easy or difficult it is to incorporate physical activity into your daily life, including supervisor support and the availability of active workstations. We will now begin a discussion about actions the organization can take to improve support for physical activity among employees.

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- What work-related factors influence your physical activity?
- What are ways our organization can improve support for physical activity among employees?
- Are there barriers to incorporating physical activity into your daily routine or using active workstations if they are available?



# Physical Activity in your Daily Routine

**Employees:** Meeting recommended activity levels can be hard while trying to balance a busy schedule. Lack of time is the most common reason people cite for not getting enough activity. Below are some strategies that can help you incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. Talk to your supervisor if you have concerns or ideas related to physical activity in your workplace.

## Link physical activity to events that happen every day

- Walk for 15 minutes during your lunch break.
- Do push-ups, core strengthening exercises, or stretch during commercial breaks while watching TV at night.
- Stretch at your desk while making a call or while talking with a co-worker.



## Be physically active while working

- If available, use active workstations throughout the workday. Once you get used to a low intensity setting, you can increase your rate or resistance so you breathe a little harder while using the active workstation.



## Incorporate physical activity into your daily commute

- Ride your bike to work.
- Take public transit and get off a stop before yours to get a short walk in before work.
- Park at the back of the parking lot to increase the number of steps between you and the door.



## Increase the number of steps you walk in a day

- Take the stairs instead of escalators or elevators.
- Take a walk to the floor above your workstation every time you go to the bathroom, get coffee, or get water.



## Include physical activity in your social life

- Invite a co-worker to go for a walk at lunch.
- Bike with a family member after dinner.
- Engage in physical activities that involve more than one person.



# Total Worker Health® Discussion: Sleep Hygiene



- Both the organization and individual have a responsibility to prioritize good sleep.
- Most adults need **7 to 8 hours** of quality sleep in each 24-hour period.
- Try to **go to bed and wake up at the same time** every day.

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# Sleep Hygiene



**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about sleep hygiene, which is the promotion of good sleep habits and regular sleep. This is important because poor sleep can contribute to health problems such as obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and depression, as well as decreases in productivity, worker safety, and quality of life.

On average, adults need 7 to 8 hours of quality sleep in each 24-hour period. Quality sleep refers to sleep with limited interruptions and consistent bed and wake times.

An individual's sleep hygiene can be improved by implementing behaviors, such as:

- Establish a regular and relaxing bedtime routine.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Exercise regularly.
- Avoid large meals, stressful conversations, exercising, or ingesting caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol too close to bedtime as these can prevent or disturb sleep.

The organization of work can influence employee sleep hygiene in many ways, including rotating shifts and job stress. We are now going to begin a discussion about ways the organization can support good sleep hygiene among employees.

*\*\*\* Supervisors, think about ways your company can change the work organization or environment to help employees get the sleep they need. For example: change shift or overtime requirements, increase job flexibility, let employees know what resources are available to help with any work schedule issues.*

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- What work-related factors influence your sleep behaviors?
- Are there ways supervisors could alter the work organization or environment to increase good sleep hygiene among employees?



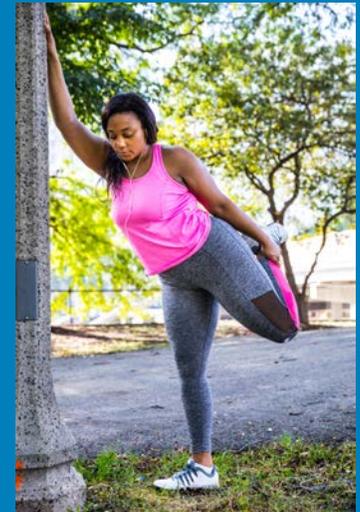


# Sleep Hygiene Strategies

**Employees:** It is recommended that adults get 7 to 8 hours of sleep in each 24-hour period. It is best to get the 7 to 8 hours with limited interruptions or waking and to go to bed and wake up at consistent times. Below are strategies for good sleep hygiene, which is the promotion of good sleep habits and regular sleep. Remember, work factors contribute to sleep quantity and quality. Talk to your supervisor if you have a concern about how work is affecting your sleep.

## Actions you can take to improve your sleep hygiene

- Schedule your sleep
- Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake time
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid caffeine in the second half of your work day
- Avoid nicotine close to bedtime
- Avoid large dinners or eating within an hour of bed
- If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation (0, 1, or 2 drinks) and avoid drinking within 3 hours of sleep
- Avoid stressful conversations or activities just before bed that increase alertness
- Establish a sleep routine
  - Turn off or dim lights, TV, and computer screens
  - Wash your face or take a shower with hot water
  - Drink hot, caffeine-free tea
  - Set out your clothes for the next day
  - Read a book or magazine
  - Listen to relaxing music or an audio book
- If you are having trouble sleeping, get help from a medical professional

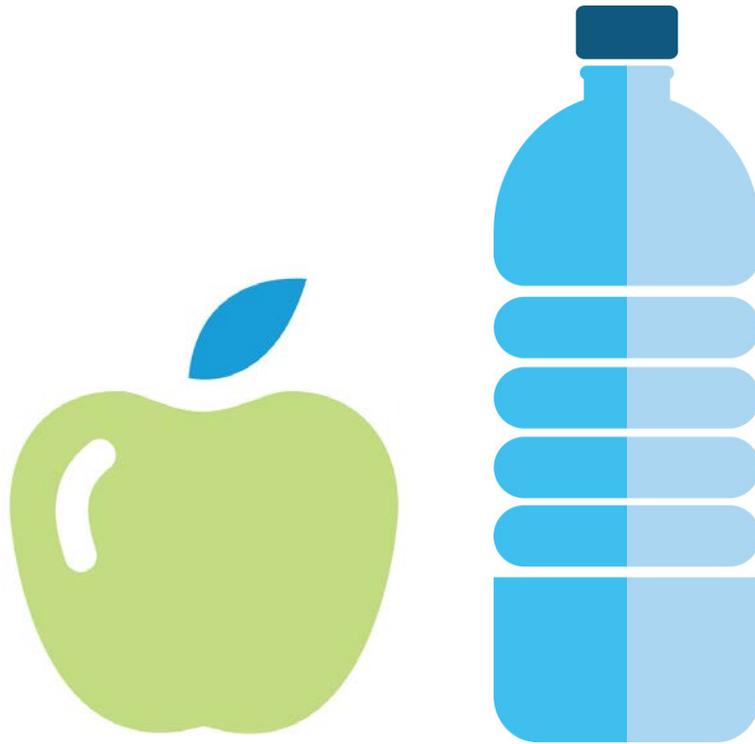


## Added strategies for night and rotating shifts

- Spend at least 7 hours in bed during every 24-hour period even if you do not sleep the entire time.
- Try sleeping at different times after night shifts or rotating shifts. Write down the time you go to sleep, time you wake up, and how you feel after sleep. This activity can help you learn which sleep schedule works best for you. When you find a schedule that feels good, work to maintain a consistent bedtime and wake time even on your days off.



# Total Worker Health® Discussion: Nutrition



- Both the organization and individual have an impact on employee food and drink choices.
- Most adults can improve their eating patterns by consuming more fruits and vegetables and substituting nutrient-rich foods for empty calories.



# Nutrition



**SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:** Hold the guide with this side facing you and the other side facing the employees. Then share the information on this page.

Today's discussion is about healthy eating patterns. Healthy eating is important because it helps prevent chronic diseases and provides other benefits, including increased energy, self-esteem, and life expectancy. Everyone experiences factors that influence how easy or difficult it is to engage in healthy eating patterns. Some of the factors that influence food and drink decisions include income, access to food assistance programs, social and cultural norms, availability of healthy foods, and the workplace. We will start this activity with information about healthy eating suggestions for you as an individual and then discuss how the workplace influences food and drink choices.

Many adults in the U.S. could benefit from making changes to their eating patterns, which can feel difficult and overwhelming. Remember, everyone has factors influencing their food and drink decisions. As we talk through healthy eating suggestions, think about what is realistic for you.

Here are some behaviors we can practice as individuals to achieve and maintain healthy eating habits:

- Eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Substitute nutrient-rich foods for empty calories.
- Plan meals ahead of time.
- Slow down, enjoy your food, and pay attention to your body - you may feel full before you have finished all the food on your plate.
- Drink lots of water.

When making changes, start small and implement more changes over time. It is important to realize that even small changes in food choices can create big changes in your health!

The work organization and environment can influence food decisions in many ways, such as through food that is available at work, work-related stress, work schedule, job compensation, and access to a refrigerator and microwave. We will now begin a discussion about actions the organization or supervisors can take to support healthy eating among employees.

**ASK: "Does anyone have ideas or comments to share?"**

Pause for discussion. Then see if there are ways to take action.

**END WITH AN ACTION PLAN** (*see ideas below of what to ask or say*).

- What would make it easier for you to consume healthy foods and drinks at work?
- How can the organization provide more support for healthy eating?
- Are there any aspects of the work organization or environment that negatively impact your food and drink choices?



# Strategies for Healthy Eating

**Employees:** These are strategies for healthy eating. It can feel difficult and overwhelming to make changes to what you eat but even small changes in food choices can create big changes in your health! The work environment can change how easy or difficult it is to practice health eating. Talk to your supervisor if you have concerns or ideas about your work food environment.

## Eat fruits and vegetables

It is recommended that an average adult consumes 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Examples of a serving of fruits or vegetables:

- One medium whole fruit (e.g. apple)
- One cup raw leafy vegetable
- One half cup raw, cooked, canned, or frozen vegetables or fruits
- One fourth cup dried fruit



## Decrease consumption of high-calorie foods and drinks

Make small changes from empty calories to nutrient-rich foods through substitution.

Examples of substitutions:

- Pretzels or air popped popcorn for chips
- A piece of fruit for a donut
- Carrot sticks with hummus for a cookie
- Zero calorie flavored water for soda

You should not deprive yourself of your favorite foods. If you love a food or drink that is high in calories, just eat it less often, in smaller portions, or both.



## Plan ahead and prepare meals

Spend some time on your days off thinking about and prepping what you will eat throughout the following week.

Examples:

- Wash fruits and vegetables
- Cook a couple dishes for lunches and dinners
- Fill a water bottle to take with you to work

