



News Release
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Contact:
Pamela Davenport
(801) 468-2757
(801) 209-0986

Employers Urged to Keep Workers Healthy; Improve the Bottom Line *National Employee Health and Fitness Day is Wednesday, May 16th*

(Salt Lake County) – With over 300,000 U.S. deaths attributed to physical inactivity and poor diets every year, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD), in conjunction with the National Association for Health and Fitness is encouraging employers to help keep their workers healthy by recognizing Wednesday, May 16th as National Employee Health and Fitness Day and organizing an employee physical activity event.

“We are encouraging all employers to recognize National Employee Health and Fitness Day by planning an employee “walk with the boss” event or arranging for some healthy afternoon snacks,” explained Terri Sory, Chronic Disease Program Manager for SLVHD. “However, we also hope the day will create an awareness that will get employers to see the importance, and possible financial savings, of helping to keep their employees healthy.”

Of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States, obesity is a risk factor for half, including coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and some types of cancer. “All of which can have a strong negative impact on a company’s “bottom line” through increased sick days, lost productivity, and high insurance premiums,” Sory says.

In Salt Lake County, the number of overweight or obese adults is a staggering 58% and 46% of the population is not adequately physically active. The SLVHD says a great way to get employees moving is to initiate a worksite wellness program that motivates employees to lead more physically active lifestyles.

“We’re not saying an employer has to build a gymnasium or buy employees memberships to fancy fitness centers,” Sory continued. “But encouraging employees to get 30 minutes of physical activity a day and recognizing their efforts, is a great way to start employees thinking about healthy behaviors. And that’s a real win-win situation for both the employee and the employer.”

SLVHD officials say there are numerous low or no-cost ways an employer can encourage healthier behaviors among employees. Things like offering healthy food options in company vending machines or in the cafeteria, encouraging employees to walk on their work breaks and during the lunch hour, supporting employee participation in worksite wellness programs, encourage friends and family to be involved in community wellness programs (Salt Lake County’s Weigh Active and Healthy Initiative), and making policy and infrastructure changes that promote healthy behaviors.

For more information on SL County’s Weigh Active and Healthy Initiative call 468-2699 or visit www.slvhd.org.

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