

Environmental Interventions in Worksite Can Impact Employee Waistlines
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Problem: Overweight and obese individuals can be high-cost employees in term of healthcare. Identification and implementation of effective interventions that reduce weight is critical to reduce the financial burden on worksites.

Evidence: We conducted a systematic review of the literature to identify possible applicable interventions that can prevent and reduce obesity in worksites.

Strategy: We searched ten electronic databases from 1966 thru 2005. More than 20,000 potential relevant citations were identified. Of these 16 articles described environmental interventions and met our study inclusion criteria.

Practice Change: Studies suggested that the environmental strategy of improving access to physical activity by provision of on-site facilities can help reduce obesity in the worksite. The implementation of this intervention usually includes a supportive corporate culture as well as buy-in from upper management.

Evaluation: Studies, regardless of their design, were considered for inclusion in this review. Studies were included if they were conducted in a worksite, designed for adults and reported weight-related outcomes such as weight, body fat, body mass index, and waist circumference. In addition, interventions reported in those studies could be for primary, secondary or tertiary prevention and could also be offered to retirees and/or spouses/partners.

Results: Ten of the 16 included studies represented two different types of environmental intervention: implementation of enhanced access to physical activity combined with health education resulted in a median -3.24 relative percent change in weight-related outcomes (n = 5 studies). Enhanced access to healthier food combined with health education resulted in a median -0.32 percent change in weight-related outcomes (n = 5 studies).

Recommendations: Worksite strategies that enhance access to physical activity plus health education are promising for weight loss. Such strategies as well as other environmental interventions need to be further evaluated.