**How to Utilize the Summer Months for Your Workplace Wellness Program**

The summer months bring more than just sunny weather and BBQs – they bring a great opportunity for re-vamping your workplace wellness program! While your wellness initiatives should be year-round, we think summer is a great time to encourage healthy eats, outdoor activity, and take wellness up a notch.

If you feel like your wellness program loses some steam during the summer months, or if employees aren’t as motivated to keep up with your wellness initiatives, try out some of these summer wellness ideas to keep things fun and exciting:

**Take it outside**

Warm weather and clear skies are the perfect excuse to step out of the office and get active. Spending more time outdoors has been shown to improve short-term memory, restore mental energy, reduce stress, and spark creativity. Getting your employees to go outside will encourage productivity and keep them healthy all year round.

With most employees [sitting at a desk](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/sedentary-lifestyle-vs.-active-lifestyle-infographic) for 40 hours a week, it’s hard for them to gain the benefits of spending time outdoors. Employers should use the summer months to their advantage by encouraging employees to get outside as much as possible. Some ideas include:

* Skip conference room meetings and take a stroll outside with a walking meeting
* Eat team lunches outside
* Take two 15-minute walking breaks around the parking lot each day
* Encourage employees to ride their bikes to work
* Set up comfortable outdoor working stations for employees to use their laptops and get some work done outside

**Eat fresh**

Who doesn’t love fresh, seasonal veggies and fruit on a warm, summer day? The summer months are perfect for a [nutritious](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/heres-why-you-want-your-employees-to-eat-well) diet full of fresh produce. Eating more fruit and veggies will help employees feel more energized, productive, and boost their immune system. Use this time to encourage employees to eat more fruit and veggies. Some ideas include:

* Supply fresh fruit and veggies in the office kitchen and break rooms
* Take group trips to local farmers markets
* Offer employee discounts or coupons for local farmers markets
* Send out healthy, summer-themed recipes each week
* Host a [healthy potluck](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/host-a-healthy-office-potluck) and ask employees to bring in their favorite summer dishes featuring fruits and veggies
* Start a [company garden](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/start-a-community-garden-with-your-employee-wellness-program) for employees to grow their own produce

**Add new challenges**

Shake things up by adding some new wellness activities and challenges. Employees will get bored and eventually lose interest with the same activities and challenges all year round. Get employees excited about their wellness program again by adding fun and competitive summer-themed activities. Also, be sure to reward participants with some sort of prize! Some ideas include:

* Outdoor walking challenge – the employee who walks the most amount of steps *outside* wins
* Biking challenge – the employee who bikes the most miles throughout the summer wins
* Wearables challenge – incorporate your employees’ fitness trackers into a challenge by keeping track of their step count or active minutes
* Bike to work challenge – the employee who bikes to work the most times throughout the summer wins
* Start a company sports team and have employees compete against each other in sand volleyball, flag football, or kickball. Make things even more fun and competitive by inviting other local companies to compete against your employees!

**Host summer team outings**

Keep things fun and promote both physical and emotional health by taking employees on some active team outings. Team outings will help co-workers bond and build relationships while also building trust and improving teamwork skills. Use summer team outings to also encourage time spent outdoors or being physically active. Some ideas include:

* Company picnics – invite employees and their families to a healthy picnic at a local park. Include some active games for employees to join in on
* Take your employees on an outdoor scavenger hunt
* Host an employee field day filled with [teambuilding challenges](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/6-team-building-ideas-that-your-employees-will-actually-like) and activities such as egg drop or tug-of-war
* Take a trip to the zoo

**Give Back**

The summer season offers plenty of volunteer opportunities for your company to give back to the community. Volunteering is great for the mental, emotional, and social health of your employees. In fact, UnitedHealth Group administered a [survey](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/~/media/UHG/PDF/2013/UNH-Health-Volunteering-Study.ashx) that found that 76% of people who volunteer said that volunteering has made them feel healthier, while 94% said that volunteering improved their mood, and 78% claimed volunteering lowered their stress levels. Some ideas to help your employees give back include:

* Offer employees PTO for volunteering
* Spend a workday volunteering as a team at a local non-profit
* Give a volunteer grant to a non-profit when an employee volunteers time there
* Send out a weekly email with current volunteer opportunities that employees can participate in

Summer is the perfect time to try out some fun, fresh ideas to encourage participation in your workplace wellness program. Incorporate some of these activities to help your employees enjoy a happy, healthy summer and make the most out of their wellness program.