

At-a-glance: Health and well-being challenges

Tips for success

Health & well-being challenges can be a fun and potentially impactful way to foster physical and emotional health at the worksite. They are often made up of small daily actions that help get employees moving, thinking, and living in healthier ways. Challenges may increase engagement in the health & well-being program, encourage healthier behaviors, and help build a Culture of Health.



When designing a challenge, keep the following in mind:

1. Target opportunities identified in data
2. Select a duration that is engaging (e.g., 2-4 weeks)
3. Ensure all employees have an opportunity to complete the challenge
4. Communicate the challenge via numerous channels
5. Encourage leadership to participate
6. Incent the challenge (perhaps with an incentive drawing)

Types of challenges to avoid

Consider avoiding challenges that are based on:

- **“Volume”** – (e.g., who can lose the most weight, who can take the most steps, etc.), as action taken is typically not sustainable and may lead to negative impact on one’s physical and/or mental health. Generally, a gradual, “slow and steady” approach tends to be more sustainable and impactful in the longer-term.
- **Body weight** – Instead, research demonstrates that a more positive and motivational approach is to focus on underlying lifestyle-based behaviors.



Upon completion, be sure to measure and evaluate the challenge to better understand impact and how challenges can be more effectively designed and delivered in the future.



Health & well-being challenge ideas

The table below depicts the kinds of actions that are often included as a part of effective health & well-being challenges (either standalone or grouped together as options for the challenge). Ensure participants aren't overwhelmed by having to meet too many criteria to complete the challenge. While providing options often helps drive autonomy, avoid the feeling of employees having to "jump through hoops" to complete the challenge.

Category	Challenge ideas	
Exercise and physical activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check out a local park• Complete a marathon in a month (via walking and/or running)• Daily 30 (enjoy 30 minutes of exercise today)• Enjoy a yoga session• Go for a bike ride• Go for a swim	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hit your daily step goal• Stand up every hour• Step it up (take a walk or go for a run)• Strength train twice a week• Stretch every day• Work up a sweat
Financial well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cancel unwanted subscription services• Cook more meals at home• Download and use a budget tracking app• Make your coffee/tea at home• Meet with a financial planner/counselor• Pack or make your own lunch each day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shop the sales and use coupons/discounts if available• Spend your money during less expensive hours (i.e., matinee shows, lunch versus dinner)
Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brown bag it (with accompanying shopping list and recipes)• Check out your local farmer's market• Drink 64 ounces of water a day• Eat 3+ servings of vegetables a day• Eat baked fish for dinner one night	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eat fruits every day• Go meatless for a day• Incorporate fruits and veggies at every meal• Make half your grains whole• Reduce alcohol intake
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid alcohol near bedtime• Dim lights well before bed• Get 7+ hours of sleep• Have a bedtime ritual• No caffeine late in the day• Practice mindfulness or meditation before bedtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read before bed• Restrict communication an hour before bedtime (i.e., texting, calling)• Stick to a regular bedtime• Turn off screens early• Use a sleep mask or blackout curtains in your bedroom
Stress management and self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Call a friend• Disconnect from digital screens for one hour• Do something creative• Enjoy a yoga session• Explore a local park• Floss once per day• Get a massage• Get organized• Join a book club• Join a cause• Keep a journal• Meditate for a few minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meet up with friends• Plant a tree or a garden• Share a compliment with someone each day• Spend an hour outside• Spend time in nature• Spend time with a pet• Take deep breaths• Tidy up for 10 minutes• Try a new group activity• Try a new hobby• Volunteer• Write a to-do list