How does workplace flexibility impact employee health?

"In today's hurried, success-driven culture, it can be challenging to be effective at work, at home, and in our personal lives. The use of flexible work arrangements can give employees some control over how they manage these competing responsibilities, thereby reducing their stress levels. Reduced stress results in healthier workers and families plus the business benefits from increased productivity and lower health care costs."

Anne Palmer, WorkLife & Wellness, Raytheon Missile Systems

What is the relationship between workplace flexibility and employee health?

Investigating the relationships between work and health can be complicated as there are many factors to consider. However, research does suggest that workplace flexibility can contribute to improved worker, family, and community health outcomes, as well as to reduced employer costs.

How can workplace flexibility improve employee health?

- Lowers stress levels
- Fosters resilience
- Lessens burnout rates
- Provides more control over one's work schedule
- Reduces conflict around competing work and family demands
- Makes it easier to care for ill children
- Facilitates meeting elder care responsibilities
- Allows for time off in small increments (1 hour, 1/2 day) instead of missing a full day

Did you know?

- A study conducted by Wake Forest University shows that increased work flexibility reduces absences for illness and improves job commitment. Workers also were less likely to indicate that health issues affected their job performance (Grzywacz & Casey, 2008).
- “The greater number of time flexible policies that employers offer predicts both higher employee commitment and lower work-related stress.” (Halpern, 2005).
- “Two out of three employees who fail to show up for work aren’t physically ill...The survey found that Personal Illness accounts for only 35 percent of unscheduled absences, while 65 percent of absences are due to other reasons, including Family Issues (21 percent), Personal Needs (18 percent), Entitlement Mentality (14 percent) and Stress (12 percent).” (CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey, 2005).
- “Employees who have immediate supervisors/managers who are more open to and supportive of the needs they have in their personal and family lives report better mental health.” (Families and Work Institute, 2002).

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How can workplace flexibility promote the health of your organization?

- Reduces health care costs
- Improves job performance
- Increases commitment and loyalty
- Raises productivity
- Lowers absenteeism
- Decreases employee turnover
- Reduces hiring and re-training costs
- Positions organization as an employer of choice

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