



2004 ACOEM Labor Day CheckList

Controlling Obesity in the Workplace

This year, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine’s (ACOEM’s) Labor Day CheckList deals with controlling obesity in the workplace. Millions of Americans are fighting the battle against obesity – a health issue that can result in adverse or even fatal health outcomes, staggering health care costs, and reduced workplace productivity. It is important to remember that obesity goes beyond individual lifestyle choices, but that everyone can work to control this problem on a daily basis both in the workplace – where employers have an opportunity to provide a supportive environment that enables healthy lifestyle choices – and in the home. The 2004 CheckList provides several steps employers and employees can take to fight obesity.

| Action Areas | Employers | Employees |
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| <i>For All Employers and Employees</i> | | |
| <p>Educational</p> <p><i>Employers and employees alike should learn the basic principles of attaining and maintaining healthier weight.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a workplace wellness program that provides mechanisms to aid employees in adopting healthy lifestyles. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage the formation of an employee wellness team. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide educational material on the health risks of being overweight. Provide materials on how to eat healthier. <input type="checkbox"/> Post a listing of calories expended for common activities such as walking, swimming, bicycling, and running. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in workplace wellness activities and read the educational material provided by your employer. <input type="checkbox"/> If your employer offers employee wellness teams, join the team! <input type="checkbox"/> Carefully read the nutritional and caloric content information on food labels. |
| <p>Work Environment and Physical Activity</p> <p><i>Employers can make the work environment a setting for policy changes that will lead to more physically active employees.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Investigate alternative work schedules to minimize fatigue which can contribute to unhealthy eating habits. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider having at least one casual dress day a week. A recent study found that when employees dressed casually, they were more physically active. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage the use of stairways instead of elevators by placing signs near the elevator and stairs highlighting the health benefits of stair use. Ensure that stairways are accessible and are properly illuminated. <input type="checkbox"/> Discourage employees from eating at their desks. Even a short walk to the cafeteria/lunch room can be helpful. <input type="checkbox"/> Support physical activity breaks during the work day. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow employees enough time for lunch so that they can walk or use the gym. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If stressed, do deep breathing exercises and practice these techniques instead of reaching for food. <input type="checkbox"/> Wear comfortable shoes for walking. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the stairs instead of an elevator whenever possible throughout the day. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, walk or bike to work. If you must drive, park your car in a spot farthest from the entrance to benefit from walking the extra distance. <input type="checkbox"/> During breaks, get up and walk around the office or exercise. There are a variety of exercises that you can do at your desk. <input type="checkbox"/> Walk at lunch – form an office walking club. |

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| <p>Food Choices</p> <p><i>Employers can help promote sensible eating habits.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Offer appealing, healthy choices in cafeterias and/or vending machines. Provide nutritional information for cafeteria selections. Smaller employers should encourage healthier food and beverages in cafeterias or vending machines. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide healthier snacks at meetings and other employee events. For example, serve fruit, popcorn, and low-fat yogurt. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide bottled water in the vending areas or cafeteria. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Request healthier food choices be served in the cafeteria and provided in vending machines. <input type="checkbox"/> Make fruit and other low calorie, nutrient rich products your food of choice. <input type="checkbox"/> Make healthier selections at fast food restaurants such as salads with low-calorie dressings. <input type="checkbox"/> Drink water instead of soft drinks or other high sugar beverages. |
| <p><i>For large to mid-size employers</i></p> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider offering memberships or discounts to health clubs. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer wellness classes on nutrition, exercise, and weight management. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide worksite walking paths and bike racks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize health club memberships offered by employers. <input type="checkbox"/> Enroll in exercise, nutrition, and/or weight management classes. |
| <p><i>GENERAL GUIDANCE</i></p> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Before starting a diet and/or exercise program, consult with your physician. If you experience a sudden weight gain or loss, see your doctor immediately. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a glass of water before meals to fill your stomach and reduce your desire for food. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid purchasing high caloric or high sugar food items. Have fruit, vegetables, and healthy snacks readily available in the home. <input type="checkbox"/> Eat dinner as early as possible. Calories will have more time to burn off prior to bedtime. <input type="checkbox"/> Limit your portion size when eating at home or in a restaurant, and never supersize your food order. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not drive to places that are within easy walking distance. Walking helps to control weight. <input type="checkbox"/> Get off the couch and start walking or become involved in a sport or other activity such as gardening. Make it your goal to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day. <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise with a friend – it’s more fun and motivating! | |