



## “Eat Right” Today for A Healthy Tomorrow

“Eat Right” is the American Diabetes Association’s theme for their March 2009 National Nutrition Month® campaign. The intent of this annual event is to bring attention to the importance of proper nutrition and [physical activity](#). Eating the recommended foods from each food group, making smart food choices every day and engaging in a routine of daily physical activity can help to ensure a healthy tomorrow.

In 2000 (latest available statistics), the total cost of obesity in the United States was estimated to be \$117 billion—\$61 billion for direct medical costs and \$56 billion for indirect costs. These dollars translate into increased health care premiums and loss time from work. Employers can help bring these costs down by educating their employees on the benefits of proper eating and daily exercise.

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for health and wellbeing. Being overweight can promote the development of serious medical conditions and exacerbate existing medical conditions. Losing just a few pounds can have health benefits and can be the beginning to even greater weight loss. However, behavioral change takes time. Consider this:



*Less than 25% of U.S. adults eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, more than 50% of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits. Unhealthy diet and physical inactivity can cause or aggravate many chronic diseases and conditions, including type 2 diabetes, stroke hypertension, heart disease, and some cancers.*

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends a diet that contains [fruits](#), [vegetables](#), [whole grains](#), and fat-free or low-fat milk and [milk products](#). A healthy diet should have sources of protein such as lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. Finally, a healthy diet should be low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

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Here are some cost effective programs that the workplace can offer during National Nutrition Month® (and every month.)

- Invite a [nutritional professional](#) to the workplace and offer free consultations and informational lectures on proper nutrition.
- Offer discounted healthy food choices as part of the daily menu options in the company cafeteria.
- Offer Weight Watchers Corporate Solutions weight-loss solutions customized to suit the needs of your company.
- Promote physical activity by offering flexible work schedules so employees can exercise.
- Offer discounted membership to exercise facilities.

Many of these programs do not require a huge financial outlay. To encourage employee involvement, offer meetings at convenient times and locations. People are more likely to participate if they can attend meetings and events while at work. Most importantly, engage management. Employees are more likely to be motivated when they know that management is interested in their progress. Give participants a voice in decisions about activity options as the most effective programs are the ones that employees help to establish.

A workforce that engages in daily physical activity and eats properly can contribute to an improved bottom line. Give your employees the tools to “Eat Right” today so that they will indeed enjoy the benefits of a healthy tomorrow.

## References

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