Healthy eating strategies in the workplace

Purpose - There is a clear link between dietary behavior and a range of chronic diseases, and overweight and obesity constitute an indirect risk in relation to these diseases. The worksite is a central venue for influencing dietary behavior. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of workplace influences on workers' dietary patterns.

Design/methodology/approach - The paper reviews the evidence of the effectiveness of dietary health promotion, and provides a brief overview of appropriate theoretical frameworks to guide intervention design and evaluation. The findings are illustrated through research examples. Findings - Through case studies and published research, it is found that workplace dietary interventions are generally effective, especially fruit and vegetable interventions. There is less consistent evidence on the long-term effectiveness of workplace weight management interventions, underscoring the need for further research in this area. This paper also reports evidence that changes in the work environment, including through health and safety programs, may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of workplace health promotion, including dietary interventions. Organizational factors such as work schedule may also influence dietary patterns. The social ecological model, the social contextual model and political process approach are presented as exemplar conceptual models that may be useful when designing or assessing the effects of workplace health promotion. Originality/value - The paper shows that using the worksite as a setting for influencing health by influencing dietary patterns holds considerable promise and may be instrumental in reducing workers' risk of developing chronic diseases.

General information
Publication status: E-pub ahead of print
Organisations: Innovation and Sustainability, Department of Management Engineering, Boston University Medical Center, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
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Pages: 182 - 196
Publication date: 2010
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: International Journal of Workplace Health Management
Volume: 3
Issue number: 3
ISSN (Print): 1753-8351
Ratings:
BFI (2010): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2010): SJR 0.258 SNIP 0.667
Original language: English
Keywords: Obesity, Occupational health and safety, Workplace, Diet;
DOIs:
10.1108/17538351011078929
Source: orbit
Source ID: 268114
Research output: Contribution to journal › Journal article – Annual report year: 2010 › Research › peer-review