



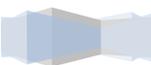
Stress Less in the Workplace

It's a fact; no matter how hard you try, you can't avoid stress in your life. It comes in a variety of different shapes and can be good or bad in the way that it affects your body. A recent statistic stated that 90 percent of health insurance claims are stress-related, along with an estimated 40-80 percent of all doctor visits being directly related to stress. The question then becomes as an employer, what can be done about it?

Medical research is seeing a direct link between diseases and stress. At Fort HealthCare, we have taken a proactive approach to this issue through an awareness challenge that takes place over six weeks called the Stress-Less Challenge. During this six-week period, employees will be introduced to educational information, worksheets and techniques on working with stress. Our goal is to help Fort HealthCare employees understand that you will have stress but how you view it and handle it is key to the outcome and affect on your body.

Medical research is showing that stress can be a factor in the following conditions:

- heart disease
- chronic fatigue
- anxiety attacks
- mood swings
- psychological distress
- depression
- sleep problems
- high blood pressure
- eating disorders
- peptic ulcers
- poor immune function
- chronic pain
- colds
- flu
- viruses
- headaches
- migraines
- alcoholism
- smoking-related respiratory ailments



Improving the stress factors in your workplace can have a positive impact on your health insurance claims, including presenteeism, absenteeism, productivity, turnover and employee culture. How exactly can you as an employer start to impact your employees stress level? Here are some ideas:

- Improve communication – employees tend to be more stressed when they feel “out of the loop”.
- Offer reimbursement through your wellness initiative or insurance for massages, aroma therapy, acupuncture, exercise classes, stress management classes or work and life balance classes.
- Promote your EAP services – many EAPs are meant to be used before employees need to see a physician.
- Evaluate your company culture, work environment, break rooms, exercise facilities, personal time off, scheduling, etc. Do these items compliment stress reduction efforts through color, temperature, smell, flexible scheduling, availability of resources and communication?

For more information on reducing stress in the workplace, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5475 or Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com.

