

# 06

## TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTIONS

### — RESOURCES AND TOOLS FOR FOCUS AREAS

- 06A Healthy eating
- 06B Physical activity
- 06C Sedentary behaviour
- 06D Social and emotional wellbeing
- 06E Smoking
- 06F Alcohol and other drugs



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In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at specific focus areas that impact the health and wellbeing of your employees.

*Image courtesy of TasPorts*



# 06A HEALTHY EATING

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I promote healthy eating in my workplace?
- What can I do to promote healthy eating in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can make healthy eating at work a priority.



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# WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

*We spend about a third of our waking lives at work*, so how we eat at work has a large influence on our overall health and wellbeing. For some employees, a significant proportion of their meals are provided through the workplace.

**Healthy eating and food safety are fundamental aspects of a healthy lifestyle**, and are therefore essential for the health and wellbeing of all employees. Good nutrition helps to maintain energy levels and concentration, contributes to overall wellbeing and assists in the prevention and management of chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancers.

**Healthy eating at work can be a challenge.** Some of the most frequently reported issues that employees face when trying to make healthier eating choices include:

- a lack of healthier foods available from cafes, canteens and vending machines
- the perceived additional expense of healthier options
- a lack of facilities to store or prepare food brought from home
- the challenges of workplace culture or regular social events, such as drinks or morning teas.

**Through your health and wellbeing program, you have a great opportunity** to support your employees by providing a work environment that makes healthy choices easy choices.

## How can I keep food safe?

- In Australia, there are around 5.4 million cases of food-borne illness each year, leading to 2.1 million days of lost work.<sup>1</sup> For any business, this is a significant and potentially avoidable cost.
- The bacteria responsible for these illnesses need food, warmth, air and time to grow to numbers dangerous to human health. These factors are all controllable.
- If your workplace is providing food to employees, there are steps that you can take to minimise the risk of food-borne illnesses.

For more information on food safety in the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Food safety in the workplace



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

*A workplace can have a significant impact on* the food choices made by employees, as the workplace itself can be a significant source of food.

*A range of factors* can influence an employee's overall food choices, including the facilities available in a workplace, the type and quantity of food that is supplied at cafeterias, at meetings and informal get-togethers, and even the choices of food provided through workplace fundraising.

For more information on healthy eating in the workplace, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## Healthy work environments

This fact sheet covers the physical environments that influence your employees' food choices, and includes topics such as access to preparation and storage facilities, what to do in off-site or mobile settings, healthy hydration, and breastfeeding-friendly workplaces.



## Healthy workplace catering

This fact sheet from the National Heart Foundation covers how to create a healthy workplace catering policy, including tips on selecting a caterer and suggested healthy foods.



## Informal food supply

This fact sheet covers more spontaneous or social food-related settings and activities in your workplace, including shared morning teas or special occasion celebrations, fruit bowls, food pantries and honesty boxes.



## Healthy fundraising

This fact sheet gives some healthy food and 'non-food' fundraising ideas for workplaces.



## Healthy vending

The Healthier Options in Vending – Employer Resources (HOVER) project provides several useful resources on how to make your workplace vending machine cater to healthier options. Visit [www.eatwelltas.org.au/hover](http://www.eatwelltas.org.au/hover) for more information.



## Food and nutrition policy

In some workplaces, having a policy around healthy eating is important. For help with developing your policy, download this template, which includes policy guidelines for cafes, canteens and kiosks, catering, vending and fundraising. The template also provides information about getting feedback from your employees.



## Healthy workplace nutrition guidelines

For workplaces that are developing menus and on-site food options for employees, this fact sheet includes important and helpful guidelines around healthy food options.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING IN MY WORKPLACE?

The following table lists some example activities that encourage healthy eating in the workplace. Remember, it's a good idea to use a mix of activities that cover people, place and policy.

Examples of activities targeting healthy eating		People	Place	Policy
	Provide a food preparation, storage and eating space away from work areas, with facilities such as refrigerators, microwaves, cutlery and crockery		✓	
	Supply low-fat milk instead of full-fat milk		✓	
	Replace the biscuit or lolly jar with fresh fruit or vegetables		✓	
	Liaise with local provider(s) to take food orders from employees and deliver boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables		✓	
	Provide free or subsidised fresh fruit and vegetables in the workplace		✓	
	Display healthy eating information in appropriate places in the workplace (e.g. Australian Guide to Healthy Eating and Go for 2&5@ resources)		✓	
	Develop regular communications on nutrition (e.g. healthy recipe of the week, nutrition tips, myth busting) and provide links to relevant websites	✓		
	Offer healthy food and drink choices at functions and meetings		✓	
	Use healthy food options for fundraising		✓	
	Promote local, state and national healthy eating events		✓	
	Provide water cooler(s) that all employees can access easily		✓	
	Establish workplace policies that promote and support employees to eat healthily, e.g. workplace healthy catering policy, vending policy, fundraising policy			✓
	Organise Diabetes Tas to provide an educational talk on healthy eating	✓		
	Organise Diabetes Tas to take employees on a food label reading tour at the local supermarket	✓		
	Organise practical nutrition workshops (e.g. cooking/food preparation courses)	✓		
	Include employees' families in education regarding nutrition, including providing information relevant to families and inviting families to nutrition information sessions	✓		
	Offer healthy food options in vending machines		✓	
	Arrange a mobile food service that offers healthy options		✓	
	Provide subsidies for the purchase of nutrition-related books, e.g. cookbooks	✓		
	Provide incentives and/or support (e.g. flexible time) for employee participation in off-site nutrition-related activities (e.g. participation in the Get Healthy coaching service)	✓		
	Change the menu in your workplace canteen to ensure that healthy options are available		✓	
	Provide a subsidised breakfast program for employees	✓		
	Create workplace gardens for fruit and vegetables		✓	



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This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

*The best way to find out if your healthy eating activities have been a success* is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- If your workplace has vending machines: What percentage of employees currently utilise the machines? What products are stocked in the machines? (Assess products as green/amber/red). If you can access sales data, determine sales of healthy and less-healthy products.
- If your workplace has a canteen: What products are offered at the canteen? (Assess products as green/amber/red). What proportion of canteen sales are green, amber or red? What is the percentage of employees currently using the canteen? How satisfied are they with the current menu options?
- If your workplace provides catering at events: What food and drinks are currently offered?
- Perform a facilities assessment of your workplace (e.g. do employees have access to fresh water and somewhere to store food brought from home?)

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and its objectives. For example, if the majority of your employees work off site, then it's more important to assess what facilities they have access to while on the road, rather than assessing those in the office.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the figures are different. You will then be able to identify whether you need to change your activities to provide better support to your employees.



Asking the following questions will help you measure the impact of your healthy eating program:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your food and nutrition policy (if you have one)?
  - Are employees aware of the policy and its requirements?
  - Do you have the right resources in place for employees to implement the policy (e.g. catering guidelines, fundraising resources)?
  - Is there employee support for the policy?
- Are your employees making good use of the support offered?
  - Are employees taking and using the healthy eating information available?
  - How many employees have participated in the healthy eating initiatives offered (e.g. utilised the fruit bowl)?



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# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

- Can you see that employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - Is there evidence of employees using the facilities provided (e.g. fridge, pantry, microwave)?
  - Is there evidence of employees following the policy requirements (e.g. requesting healthy options when ordering catering)?
  - What are employees saying about the changes that have been made (e.g. healthier catering, fruit bowl on offer)?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - Has the percentage of employees using the vending machine or canteen changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Has the availability of healthier food and drinks in vending machines increased?
  - What do your employees think about the program (e.g. do they think it has been effective)?

The way you collect this information will depend on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

## Department of Police and Emergency Management, Tasmania

The Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) employs approximately 1600 staff across Tasmania, comprising the Tasmania Police, State Emergency Service, Forensic Science Service and the Tasmanian Fire Service. The nature of work in many of these organisations involves shift work and duties away from normal food supply outlets, both of which are identified factors in influencing behaviours around healthy eating.

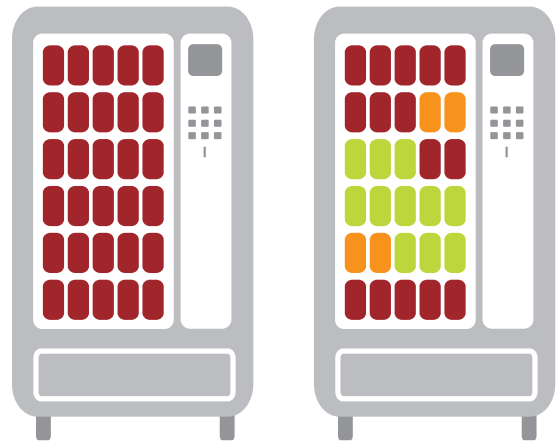
A project called *Good Fuel for Police* had previously been developed by the DPEM and the Department of Health and Human Services. Its aim was to learn about the factors that were influencing the nutrition choices and other lifestyle behaviours of DPEM employees.

One of the main barriers identified by *Good Fuel for Police* was the lack of healthy food options for shift workers outside of normal working hours. It was seen that many employees relied on unhealthy snacks from the on-site vending machine. The DPEM decided to move to healthier vending options, with support from Eat Well Tasmania and the Healthier Options in Vending-Employer Resources (HOVER) program.

The action plan to implement HOVER within DPEM involved:

- evaluating the existing vending machine contents
- introducing a vendor with the capacity to provide healthier vending
- providing support in the transition stages.

The following diagrams show the change from the original traditional vending machine containing 100% of foods classified as 'red' (foods high in energy, saturated fat and sodium) to a machine with healthier products classified as 'green' or 'amber' (foods that are higher in nutritional value, contain less saturated fat, salt and sugar, and are lower in energy). The new vending machine now has a ratio of 47% red, 17% amber and 36% green foods.



Pre-healthier vending

Post-healthier vending

Introducing some healthier options in the vending machine has reduced the overall energy and saturated fat content of the products by more than half.

The response to the healthier vending options has been very positive. The DPEM now intends to implement healthier vending in key police stations throughout Tasmania.

'The new vending machine with the healthy options is fantastic – in the first few weeks we sold out of several healthy products, and have had trouble keeping up with demand. Everyone has commented on the taste and variety of new products and the uptake has been excellent.'

Mike Cosgrove  
Manager, Human Resources, Department of  
Police and Emergency Management



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can help you access specific information related to healthy eating.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Where to go for more information -  
Healthy eating

## REFERENCES

- 1 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing 2005, *Foodborne illness in Australia*, Canberra, Australia [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)



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# 06B PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I promote physical activity in my workplace?
- What can I do to promote physical activity in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can encourage your employees to become more physically active.



# WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

**Physical activity is defined as** 'any sustained body movement that uses energy'.<sup>1</sup> It is widely recognised that the benefits of physical activity include good physical and mental health, the achievement and maintenance of a healthy weight, and improved overall health and wellbeing.

To find out more about the benefits of physical activity, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## Benefits of physical activity

In Australia, it is estimated that 10 million people spend an average of eight hours per day in their workplace.<sup>5</sup> It is also known that an increasing number of people have jobs that involve many hours of sitting. This results in fewer opportunities for many people to be physically active during working hours.

A survey of Australian employees conducted by Medibank Private found that 10% of workers are completely inactive, 40% only participate in minimal physical activity and 12% participate in less than one hour of physical activity per week.<sup>6</sup>

To find out how much physical activity is good for you, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## How much physical activity?

**There is a range of evidence** to support the development of a physical activity element in your workplace health and wellbeing program.

Research shows that valuable programs include those that motivate individual employees, and those that provide rewards for improved health habits and lifestyles.<sup>7</sup>

## Physical activity fast facts

- The Australian Health Survey 2011-2012 showed that 69.4% of Tasmanians aged 18+ were classified as being inactive or having low activity levels.<sup>2</sup>
- Physical inactivity is identified as the fourth leading risk factor for mortality. Physical inactivity contributes to three of the other top five risk factors including high blood pressure, high blood glucose levels, and being overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>
- Physical inactivity contributes to 6.6% of the overall health burden in Australia, in terms of the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death. Physical inactivity is estimated to cost the health sector \$672 million each year with a further \$1135 million lost in production and leisure.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the physical activity strategies that have been found to be most effective in workplaces include using prompts to encourage stair use, ensuring access to places or opportunities for physical activity, and providing education or peer support. Supporting employees with individual behavioural skills training has also been found to be a good way to increase physical activity, improve nutrition or both.<sup>8</sup>



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# WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?



## Physical activity and employee safety

*The benefits of being physically active outweigh the potential risks* people may encounter when participating in physical activity. However, it is always important to be aware of general safety when encouraging your employees to increase their physical activity.

For more information on this topic, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



### Physical activity and employee safety

This fact sheet provides some standard information in relation to safety screening questionnaires, correct equipment, warm-ups, cool-downs and the effect of different climate conditions.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

*There are many ways that you can encourage employees to participate in physical activity and be active in as many ways as possible.*

For more information on physical activity in the workplace, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## Active transport

Active transport is any physical activity that is undertaken as a means of transport and not solely as a recreational activity.<sup>9</sup> This fact sheet covers the benefits of active transport and tips on how to incorporate active transport into your work day.



## Active meetings and events

This fact sheet outlines how to prepare for and conduct active meetings and events in your workplace.



## Physical activity policy











In some workplaces, having a policy around physical activity is important. This template will help you develop a physical activity policy for your workplace.






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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

The following table lists examples of strategies and activities that may be useful to encourage physical activity in the workplace. Remember, aim for a mix of activities that target people, place and policy.

	Examples of activities targeting active transport	People	Place	Policy
	Map and promote walking and public transport routes close to your workplace		✓	
	Encourage and support employees to use active transport strategies, such as getting off the bus several stops earlier or parking the car further away		✓	
	Provide a bike or bike fleet for employees to attend local meetings		✓	
	Establish a bicycle user group	✓		
	Provide a secure bike storage area in a safe, convenient and accessible location		✓	
	Provide tickets for employees to attend meetings via public transport		✓	
	Provide weather protection gear to allow employees to walk to local meetings (e.g. umbrella, spray jacket, sunscreen)		✓	
	Provide facilities such as showers and change rooms so that employees can actively travel to and from work, and participate in physical activity in their lunch breaks		✓	
	Develop a plan that encourages active transport to and from work			✓
	Consider the local environment around the workplace in terms of safety, security, lighting and footpaths. Liaise with your local council to discuss suitable areas for physical activity		✓	

	Examples of activities targeting employee information and education	People	Place	Policy
	Provide information to employees on types of physical activity and how much physical activity is required for health benefits, as outlined by the Australian Government and the World Health Organisation	✓		
	Encourage employees to participate in government health campaigns and services, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Swap It, Don't Stop It</li> <li>■ Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service® <a href="http://www.gethealthy.tas.gov.au">www.gethealthy.tas.gov.au</a></li> </ul>	✓		
	Set up a central point for displaying physical activity information, such as a noticeboard in the tearoom or information on payslips	✓		

This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?

	Examples of activities targeting employer support opportunities	People	Place	Policy
👍	Offer flexible working hours to provide employees with opportunities for physical activity before work, after work and in lunch breaks			✓
👍	Support mini physical activity breaks during work hours, such as stretching and/or short walks			✓
👍	Include a 'stretch break' on meeting agendas			✓
👍	Allow employees to hold 'walking meetings' and/or take short physical activity breaks if they have desk-based jobs			✓
👍	Post signs at lifts and escalators to encourage the use of stairs, and develop supporting internal communications (e.g. Find Thirty Every Day <a href="http://www.findthirty.tas.gov.au">www.findthirty.tas.gov.au</a> campaign and point-of-decision prompts)		✓	
👍	Liaise with local fitness centres to obtain discounted rates or memberships	✓		
👍	Organise user pays on-site fitness classes	✓		
👍+	Start a lunch time walking group or exercise group	✓		
👍+	Provide employees with pedometers or subsidised entry to a pedometer challenge	✓		
👍+	Set up a pedometer loan scheme	✓		
👍+	Encourage employee challenges or competitions using pedometers, such as the Global Corporate Challenge <a href="http://www.gettheworldmoving.com">www.gettheworldmoving.com</a> or 10 000 Steps <a href="http://www.10000steps.org.au">www.10000steps.org.au</a> challenge	✓		
👍+	Establish partnerships with local bike shops to provide corporate rates to employees	✓		
👍+	Provide subsidised membership at local fitness centres or aquatic centres		✓	
👍+	Provide subsidised on-site fitness classes	✓		
👍+	Provide on-site exercise facilities, for example, multi-purpose recreational rooms for group exercise classes or gyms		✓	
👍+	Provide incentives and rewards for increased physical activity, such as free gym passes or pedometers	✓		

	Examples of activities targeting employees with specific needs	People	Place	Policy
👍+	Support employees considered 'at-risk' (e.g. those overweight, with high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes) to increase their physical activity levels by participating in programs such as the Get Active Program <a href="http://www.wsr.org.au/get-active-program">www.wsr.org.au/get-active-program</a> or the Get Healthy Coaching and Information Service® <a href="http://www.getthehealthy.tas.gov.au">www.getthehealthy.tas.gov.au</a>	✓		
👍+	Support employees with a disability to participate in physical activity. Promote implementation of the <i>Sport and Recreation Tasmania Framework for People with a Disability</i> <a href="http://www.sportandrecreation.tas.gov.au/sportrectas/publications/sport_and_recreation_framework_for_people_with_a_disability">http://www.sportandrecreation.tas.gov.au/sportrectas/publications/sport_and_recreation_framework_for_people_with_a_disability</a>			✓



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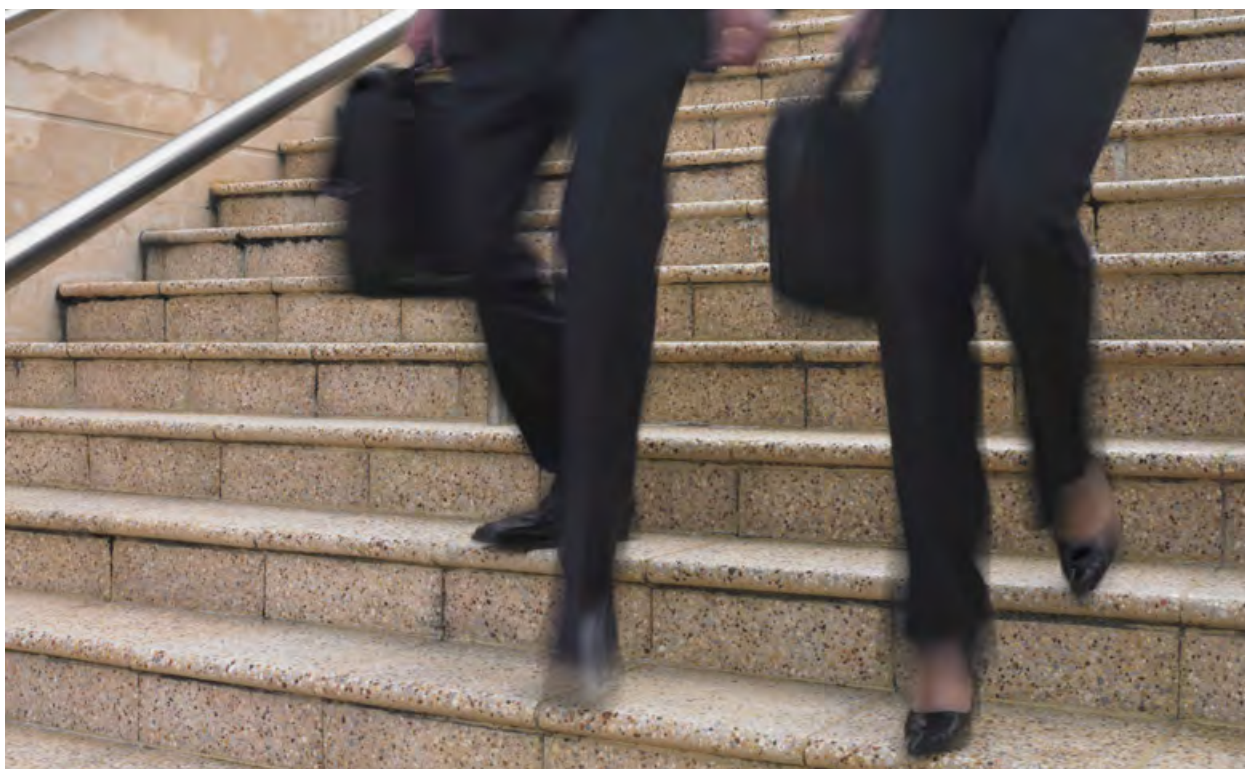
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This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN MY WORKPLACE?



	Examples of activities utilising external support	People	Place	Policy
👍	Promote physical activity opportunities outside the workplace, such as local walking groups	✓		
👍	Connect with programs in local communities, for example, Active Launceston <a href="http://www.activelaunceston.com.au">www.activelaunceston.com.au</a> and the Get Active Program <a href="http://www.wsrt.org.au/get-active-program">www.wsrt.org.au/get-active-program</a>	✓		
👍+	Promote local, state and national physical activity and/or active transport events, such as Walk to Work Day <a href="http://www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp">www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp</a> and Ride to Work Day <a href="http://www.ride2work.com.au/general/ride-to-work">www.ride2work.com.au/general/ride-to-work</a>		✓	
👍+	Provide support for employees to enter fun runs or walking events as individuals or as a workplace team	✓		
👍+	Provide support and encouragement for organisation sport teams	✓		
👍+	Have an exercise physiologist attend and perform simple fitness tests on site	✓		
👍+	Host on-site visits from specialists such as exercise physiologists or fitness experts to talk about physical activity ideas and benefits and to demonstrate safe exercises in the workplace	✓		
👍+	Have a fitness instructor lead employee walking, jogging and/or running groups	✓		



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This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

*The best way to find out if your physical activity initiatives have been a success* is to look at the impact of any changes you have made in your organisation. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- the number of employees who are currently physically active
- how often employees participate in physical activity
- the number of employees who use active transport to/from work
- how many steps per day employees take while at work
- what might stop employees participating in more physical activity
- a facilities assessment of your workplace (e.g. number of bike racks available, availability of standing workstations, showers and point-of-decision signage).

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and objectives. For example, there is no need to measure employees' stair usage if stairwells are inaccessible.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the results are different. Then you will be able to determine if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your initiatives to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your physical activity policy (if you have one)?
  - Are employees aware of the policy and its requirements?
  - Is there staff support for the policy?
  - Does your point-of-decision signage get your message across (e.g. do you have the right number and type of signs, and are they are still in place and legible)?

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
  - What is the level of employee participation in the program initiatives offered?
  - How many employees have participated in the physical activity initiatives offered?
  - Is it always the same employees involved or is the program reaching a range of people?
- Can you see that employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - Is there evidence of employees using the facilities provided (e.g. bike racks, stairwells)?
  - What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they will comply with its requirements?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - Has the percentage of employees participating in physical activity changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Has the average intensity and/or duration of physical activity of employees changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Are employees aware of physical activity signage/noticeboard information and does it influence their behaviour?
  - Has employees' knowledge or awareness of physical activity changed?
  - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, observations, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

## Devonport City Council, Tasmania

Launched in 2009, Devonport City Council's Health and Wellbeing Program was developed in conjunction with staff, management and students from nearby Reece High School. The program aims to make the Council more attractive to potential employees, and increase productivity and improve staff retention.

The program initially used a staff survey to identify issues and potential initiatives. One of the identified issues was inadequate physical activity by employees. As a result of this, following a proposal put together by two employees, the Council implemented a Workplace Bike Program.

Two bicycles were purchased for staff to use in place of a work car. These were used to attend off-site meetings, undertake field work, site visits or technical inspections and to run errands. The bikes were also available for personal use, including during lunch breaks, before and after work.

The program was specifically tailored to indoor-based employees, with a team of four staff working on implementation. Documentation developed for the project included log books, a map with recommended riding boundaries, maintenance check logs, defect tags, riding and safety tips, a safety induction program, membership application form and a pre-ride preparation checklist.

The two key organisers undertook Intermediate Cycling training through Cycling South, Tasmania's peak cycling body. This reinforced the Council's commitment to the program, and added professionalism and credibility to the induction process. It also provided an opportunity to refine documentation and processes based on best-practice training and advice prior to a roll out to all staff. The development and planning phase took less than three months.

The program is integrated with the Council's workplace incident system, with any incidents involving the bikes (including near misses) being reported.



Employees wishing to use the work bikes go through an induction process, which includes a basic riding skills test and rudimentary training. Regular maintenance checks are carried out to ensure the bikes are safe, and risk management audits ensure that program guidelines are being upheld.

A further benefit of the Workplace Bike Program is that employees who do not have a vehicle licence now have a means of transport for work purposes. Devonport City Council has a number of employees for whom this is of interest.

The aims of the Devonport City Council Workplace Bike Program are to:

- promote healthy lifestyles and the benefits of cycling
- provide quick, convenient and efficient transport for work-related trips
- save on fuel and other motor vehicle running costs
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions, road congestion and pollution



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

- demonstrate to the community that Council is serious about sustainable transport and reducing its carbon footprint
- enable staff to be more active at work
- provide leadership to the community on the importance of being active and looking for alternate options to using a motor vehicle.

The second anniversary of the initiative was marked on 1 February 2012. During those two years, staff made 289 trips, travelling a distance of 2140 kilometres. To date, 19 inductions have been completed.

A number of benefits of the Workplace Bike Program have been identified as follows:

- Technical staff can use the bikes for inspections and GPS pick-up in areas without vehicular access, such as parks and reserves. With staff using shared footpaths to reach their destinations the initiative is also allowing earlier detection of hazards and other maintenance issues on these community assets.
- With many Council staff having previously expressed their concern at using motor vehicles for short trips, the program has provided a more environmentally conscious option, allowing them to carry out work knowing that they are actively reducing carbon emissions. Council fuel saving through using bikes (around 50 cents per km) is also contributing to a staff sense of directly reducing the Council's carbon footprint and energy expenditure.
- With high demand making Council pool vehicles frequently unavailable, having two bikes available for short-trip use has assisted employees to complete important work tasks even when no vehicle has been available.
- Travelling on bikes has allowed for greater connection and interaction with the community and has enhanced liveability and social health. It is hoped the example being set by Council employees will encourage other local organisations and the community to adopt similar programs and initiatives.

- By reducing vehicle use through cycling rather than driving, the Council has benefited from reduced wear and tear on vehicles, savings in fuel and reduced vehicle running costs.
- There are also numerous environmental benefits such as reducing air pollution, reduced carbon emissions and a direct contribution to a more sustainable community. These returns on investment are difficult to calculate but are nevertheless important benefits of the program.

The program has seen a new awareness amongst staff of the importance of being active and doing regular exercise, as they see their colleagues going out on the bikes and coming back invigorated. One staff member who did not own a bike purchased one after joining the program and started cycling as a new hobby. Often, participants in the program comment that they feel better after cycling and that they are more alert when they return to their computer work.

## More stories are needed!

The Premier's Physical Activity Council is seeking stories from individuals, organisations and community groups about people participating in regular physical activity and how it has made a difference to their enjoyment of life.

Tasmanians are invited to submit stories in text, images, video, audio and other art forms, by either uploading them onto an interactive website, or posting them in to be uploaded.

For more information, visit the Get Moving Tasmania website at [www.getmoving.tas.gov.au](http://www.getmoving.tas.gov.au)



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

*There are several organisations that can help you* access specific information related to physical activity.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM

or from **[www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)**



Where to go for more  
information - Physical activity



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# 06C SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I address sedentary behaviour in my workplace?
- What can I do to address sedentary behaviour in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can encourage your employees to sit less and move more during their working day.



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# WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR IN MY WORKPLACE?

**Sedentary behaviour is defined** as any behaviour that requires very low energy expenditure, and does not increase energy levels above normal resting levels. With sedentary behaviour, the main posture is sitting or lying down, and it includes activities such as sleeping, sitting, watching television and playing seated computer games.<sup>1</sup> The terms 'sitting time' and 'sedentary time' are often used interchangeably but they both refer to sedentary behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of cars, computers, televisions, electronic games and modern workplace practices, prolonged sedentary behaviour has become a part of everyday life for most people.

The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study (2005) found that being sedentary was associated with higher blood sugar levels and blood fat levels, larger waist circumference, and an increased prevalence of metabolic syndrome (see text box below), even in those who regularly participated in moderate and vigorous physical activity. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that breaking up sedentary time (for example, to get a drink, answer the phone or simply stand up) was shown to be better for your health.<sup>4,5</sup>

**While public health campaigns often focus on increasing physical activity levels**, evidence is emerging that shows sedentary behaviour is a distinct and independent risk factor for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, regardless of physical activity levels. Adults can meet or even exceed the national physical activity guidelines, yet if they sit for long periods, their health is still compromised.<sup>6</sup>

To put this into context for the workplace, even if your employees are physically active before and after work, if they sit down all day in the workplace they are still exposing themselves to significant health risks.

**With almost half of Australians working in sedentary jobs**, this is a very important issue to address in the workplace.

*Metabolic syndrome (also called syndrome X or insulin resistance syndrome) is a clustering of metabolic risk factors including abdominal obesity (a large waist circumference), high levels of blood fats and blood sugar, and high blood pressure.<sup>5</sup>*



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## Sedentary behaviour fast facts

- The National Health Survey 2007-2008 showed that 78% of adults spent between two and six hours a day sitting at leisure.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost half (45%) of Australians work in a sedentary-type job where they spend most of their time sitting.<sup>3</sup>
- An Australian study found that prolonged sitting increased the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, even for people who met the recommended physical activity guidelines.<sup>4</sup>

For more information on sedentary behaviour, download the following resources from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



### To sit or stand? That is the question...

This fact sheet outlines the basics of sitting versus standing in a work environment.



### Sitting less for adults

This fact sheet from the National Heart Foundation contains guidelines around sitting time for adults, including tips to reduce sitting time in the workplace.

# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR IN MY WORKPLACE?

*There are many ways you can encourage your employees to reduce their sedentary behaviour and break up their sitting time while at work.*

For more information on sedentary behaviour in the workplace, download the following resources from **[www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)**



## Sit-stand adjustable workstations

The use of standing workstations (or height-adjustable workstations) is becoming more widespread in the workplace. This is an effective way to provide opportunities for standing time. This fact sheet outlines some of the basic considerations to take into account when considering the implementation of standing workstations.



## Physical activity policy

In some workplaces, sedentary behaviour can be addressed as part of a physical activity policy. This template will help you develop a physical activity policy for your workplace.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR IN MY WORKPLACE?



The following table lists examples of strategies and activities that may be useful for reducing sedentary behaviour in the workplace. Remember, aim for a mix of activities that target people, place and policy.

	Examples of activities targeting sedentary behaviour	People	Place	Policy
👍	Support mini physical activity breaks during work hours, such as standing when taking telephone calls, stretching and/or taking short walks			✓
👍	Set up office facilities that encourage breaks in sitting time, for example, ensure the printer is not close to the desk		✓	
👍	Encourage employees to walk around to colleagues in close proximity, rather than relying on email for communication	✓		
👍	Encourage standing or walking meetings			✓
👍	Encourage stop-and-stretch breaks on long driving commutes		✓	
👍	Include a stretch break on meeting agendas			✓
👍	Encourage employees to have lunch away from their desks	✓		
👍	Provide posters that prompt employees to stand up at regular intervals	✓		
👍+	Introduce a policy to reinforce desk breaks and support movement or standing at workstations and during meetings			✓
👍+	Provide software that encourages breaks in sitting time		✓	
👍+	Provide sit-stand adjustable workstations for employee use		✓	



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This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

*The best way to find out if your initiatives to address sedentary behaviour have been a success* is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- the number of employees who currently have desk-based jobs
- the number of hours employees spend continuously sitting while at work (see text box at right)
- how many steps per day your employees take while at work (see text box at right)
- the availability of facilities and resources to support reduced sedentary behaviour (e.g. standing workstations, posters demonstrating short simple exercises to be performed at work).

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and objectives. For example, there is no need to measure employees' sitting time if your employees spend most of their day standing.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the results are different. Then you will be able to identify if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your initiatives to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your physical activity policy (if you have one)?
  - Are employees aware of the policy and its requirements?
  - Is there staff support for the policy?
  - Does your signage get your message across (e.g. do you have the right number and type of signs, and are they are still in place and legible)?

## Measuring sedentary behaviour

Measuring sedentary behaviour can be as simple as:

- asking employees how many hours/minutes per day they spend sitting at work
- using direct observation
- using tools to measure activity.

**Accelerometers** are small, non-invasive electronic devices worn on the hip. They measure movement and allow researchers to examine patterns of physical activity and behaviour.<sup>5</sup> Accelerometers are one of the most common tools used to measure sitting time.

**Pedometers** are small devices worn on the hip that measure the number of steps a person takes. They do this by detecting each time the person's heel strikes the ground. Pedometers can be calibrated to suit an individual's step length.



# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
  - What is the level of employee participation in the sedentary behaviour initiatives offered?
  - How many employees have participated in the initiatives offered?
  - Is it always the same employees involved or is the program reaching a range of people?
- Can you see that employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - Is there evidence of employees using the facilities provided (e.g. standing workstations)?
  - What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they will comply with its requirements?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - Has the number of hours employees spend continuously sitting while at work changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Has the number of breaks for sitting employees changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Are employees aware of sedentary behaviour signage/noticeboard information and does it influence their behaviour?
  - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can help you access specific information related to sedentary behaviour. These organisations, their contact details and the services they provide are listed below.

<b>National Heart Foundation</b> <a href="http://www.heartfoundation.org.au">www.heartfoundation.org.au</a> 1300 362 787	Provides information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ sedentary behaviour</li> <li>■ heart health</li> <li>■ events</li> <li>■ programs such as <i>Heartmoves</i> and <i>Heart Foundation Walking</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute</b> <a href="http://www.bakeridi.edu.au/SOSAtWork">www.bakeridi.edu.au/SOSAtWork</a>	Provides information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ research in relation to sedentary behaviour</li> <li>■ medical research with a focus on diagnosis, prevention and management of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.</li> </ul>
<b>Exertime program</b> <a href="http://www.exertime.com">www.exertime.com</a>	A software tool that encourages employees to sit less and move more during their work day.





# FURTHER READING

For more general information on sedentary behaviour, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Medibank Private: Stand up  
Australia - Sedentary behaviour  
in workers

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Image courtesy of Juicy Isle



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# 06D SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I promote social and emotional wellbeing in my workplace?
- What can I do to promote social and emotional wellbeing in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can provide a workplace environment that contributes to the positive social and emotional wellbeing of your employees.



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# WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY WORKPLACE?

**Social and emotional wellbeing** is about our ability to work productively, realise our abilities, contribute to our community and cope with the normal stresses of life.

In the same way that poor physical health can lead to a physical disorder or illness, poor social and emotional wellbeing can lead to disorders such as anxiety, depression and/or other mental illnesses. Being socially and emotionally well is essential for the overall health and wellbeing of your employees.

Effectively managing and promoting positive social and emotional wellbeing in the workplace not only has a positive impact on employees, it also benefits organisations through reduced absenteeism, presenteeism and sick leave.

**There are many factors that contribute** to the social and emotional wellbeing of your employees, both inside and outside the workplace.

Employers have an important role in managing workplace factors that can have a negative impact on an employee's social and emotional wellbeing. It is equally important for employers to provide an environment and culture that is supportive of issues outside the workplace that might be influencing an employee's overall wellbeing. These issues might be around family or relationships, health concerns or other pressures an employee might be facing.

## Stress

**Stress is a normal part of life** and can be a positive thing that helps us achieve our best or meet a challenge. Too much stress, however, can have a negative impact on an employee's social and emotional wellbeing. Stress is linked to a range of physical and mental health problems such as cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal issues and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. There can also be negative consequences for the wider organisation when the effects of stress lead to increased absenteeism, presenteeism and employee turnover.<sup>1</sup>

**Stress can be caused by factors both inside and outside the workplace.** Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.<sup>1, 2</sup> Workplace stress is a growing concern in Australia<sup>1</sup> and affects all employment sectors

and occupational levels.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that work-related factors such as poor organisational practices, work overload and pressure, lack of job control, and unclear work roles can lead to stress and have a negative impact on the wellbeing of your employees.<sup>4</sup>

For more information on stress and how it can be caused by work factors, as well as the impact of stress on work outcomes, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



### Stress and the workplace - information for employers

Non-work related factors such as family and relationship issues and financial pressures are common causes of stress. These issues can also impact on an employee's performance at work and organisations can play a role in supporting their employees to manage stressful situations outside the workplace.

For more information on non-work related factors, and how these may impact work outcomes, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



### Domestic violence and the workplace - information for employers

This fact sheet discusses the impact that domestic violence can have in the workplace, and what employers can do to help.



### Fatigue management

This fact sheet discusses the impact that fatigue can have in the workplace, and what employers can do to help.



### Financial stress

This fact sheet discusses the impact that financial stress can have on employees, and what employers can do to help.



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# WHY SHOULD I PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY WORKPLACE?



## Depression

**Depression is a mental illness that has a variety of symptoms**, and may appear differently in different people. Common symptoms of depression include persistent sadness, tiredness and lack of energy and motivation, which in the workplace can lead to decreased concentration and reduced productivity and engagement.<sup>5</sup> Depression is very different to experiencing a 'down' day or two, or the lack of motivation everyone feels at some time.

While there are numerous factors that contribute to depression, Australian statistics suggest that 13.2% of depression in men and 17.2% of depression in women is attributable to workplace stress.<sup>4</sup>

For more information on depression, including signs and symptoms, how you can help an employee with depression, and where you can go for more information, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Depression and the workplace -  
information for employers



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## Anxiety

**Anxiety is a normal reaction that everyone feels at some time**, usually in response to impending danger or in anticipation of an event that might be pleasant or unpleasant. An anxiety disorder is when anxiety is severe or long-lasting and begins to interfere with a person's life or relationships. Prolonged anxiety can lead to depression.<sup>5</sup>

Common symptoms of anxiety that can impact on an employee's performance at work include:

- excessive worrying and emotional distress
- irrational thinking
- physical responses such as stomach pains
- avoidance behaviours.

For more information on anxiety, download the following resources from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



### Anxiety disorders

This fact sheet from the Australian organisation *beyondblue* gives more information on the spectrum of anxiety disorders, their common treatment and how you might be able to help someone living with an anxiety disorder.



### How you can help someone with anxiety or depression

This fact sheet from *beyondblue* gives more information about how to talk to someone who might be living with depression or anxiety.



# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY WORKPLACE?

There is growing evidence to suggest that our social and emotional wellbeing is positively affected by engaging in meaningful activities, enjoying a balanced diet and taking part in regular exercise. All of these things help us to maintain the correct balance in our body and mind.<sup>5</sup> Establishing a health and wellbeing program in your workplace is a good way to support the social and emotional wellbeing of your employees, as well as minimise the impact of stress, depression and anxiety on your organisation.

Work can contribute to an employee's social and emotional wellbeing by providing social connectedness and focus.<sup>5</sup> A supportive and consultative workplace culture acknowledges the importance of social and emotional wellbeing, encourages open communication and feedback, and considers social and emotional wellbeing issues as part of the development of all workplace policies and procedures.

Ensuring that work activities are satisfying and health-promoting is also beneficial to the social and emotional wellbeing of your employees. This includes work that:

- provides interesting and challenging duties
- has genuine responsibility
- provides opportunity for achievement by individuals
- includes recognition for such achievements
- has scope for individual advancement and growth.<sup>3</sup>



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY WORKPLACE?

The following table lists some example strategies and activities to promote social and emotional wellbeing in your workplace. Remember, it's a good idea to use a mix of activities that cover people, place and policy.

	Examples of strategies to promote social and emotional wellbeing	People	Place	Policy
👍	Provide information that supports social and emotional wellbeing, for example, brochures, fact sheets, intranet, posters and access to seminars. The fact sheets in this toolkit can be used for this purpose	✓		
👍	Promote local recreation leisure opportunities such as book clubs, local walking groups, art and craft groups, parks, and relaxation and yoga classes	✓		
👍	Promote telephone support services such as <i>beyondblue</i> , Lifeline and employee assistance programs	✓		
👍	Offer flexible working arrangements that take into consideration employees' circumstances outside the workplace (such as child care and family illnesses)			✓
👍	Support employees to attend external events about social and emotional wellbeing issues such as those held during WorkSafe month <a href="http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au">www.worksafe.tas.gov.au</a> or Mental Health Week <a href="http://www.mentalhealthweek.com.au">www.mentalhealthweek.com.au</a>	✓		
👍	Offer training or support from superannuation providers, such as seminars or one-on-one sessions on financial planning and retirement planning	✓		
👍	Create policies that provide guidance to supervisors on supporting employees with social and emotional wellbeing issues			✓
👍	Organise regular social functions and include employees' families	✓		
👍	Allocate break-out spaces for staff to have time out, rejuvenate or make private phone calls		✓	
👍	Offer free or subsidised workplace massages		✓	
👍+	Create a staff health and wellbeing library	✓		
👍+	Develop an intranet page that links to support services such as <i>beyondblue</i> online training, MoodGYM <a href="http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au">www.moodgym.anu.edu.au</a> and e-couch <a href="http://www.ecouch.anu.edu.au">www.ecouch.anu.edu.au</a>	✓		
👍+	Run an in-house safety week or month with a focus on mental health	✓		
👍+	Arrange external speakers on topics such as conflict resolution, time management and personal finance management	✓		
👍+	Provide access to employee assistance program providers. The Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia <a href="http://www.eapaa.org.au">www.eapaa.org.au</a> can advise you of local providers	✓		
👍+	Provide access to an organisational psychologist to support individuals, managers/supervisors and your organisation to develop and implement appropriate initiatives	✓		
👍+	Review policies and practices to ensure they promote social and emotional wellbeing and actively support employees' issues, including return to work following time off for a mental illness			✓

This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.










This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO PROMOTE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN MY WORKPLACE?

	Examples of strategies to promote social and emotional wellbeing	People	Place	Policy
	Provide training for managers on understanding the impact of the work environment on social and emotional wellbeing	✓		
	Encourage managers to provide formal recognition for exceptional employee efforts (for example, hosting a lunch, providing a gift voucher)	✓		
	Have a health and wellbeing plan in place that encourages employees to find work/life balance, and that supports employees to eat nutritiously, exercise regularly and accommodate other commitments			✓
	Offer education programs around social and emotional wellbeing issues such as emotional intelligence, resilience, mindfulness, stress management and conflict resolution	✓		
	Offer referral pathways to connect employees to support services such as mental health, domestic violence and/or substance abuse services	✓		
	Provide critical incident support for managers and individuals	✓		
	Participate in the Business in Mind research program <a href="http://www.businessinmind.edu.au">www.businessinmind.edu.au</a>	✓		

This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

## Return to work

Sometimes an employee may need time off as a result of depression, anxiety or a related disorder – regardless of whether or not the episode was related to the workplace. It is important that organisations support employees as they transition back to work.

For more information on how to support an employee's return to work following a break due to a social or emotional wellbeing issue, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Helping employees successfully return to work following depression, anxiety or a related mental health problem:  
Guidelines for organisations



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# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

*The best way to find out if your social and emotional wellbeing initiatives have been a success* is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your workplace. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start, for example:

- What percentage of employees know where to go for support in the workplace for a social and emotional wellbeing issue?
- What percentage of employees access support for social and emotional wellbeing issues (if available through the organisation)?
- What support services are available for managers and employees dealing with social and emotional wellbeing issues?
- How many of your policies and procedures incorporate social and emotional wellbeing issues?
- How many workplace events take place that relate to social and emotional wellbeing? This can include training or information sessions on social and emotional wellbeing, as well as events held outside the workplace such as book groups or weekend bushwalks.
- What systems are in place for employees to provide feedback on workplace issues such as rosters and hours of work?

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and objectives. For example, there is no need to measure employee awareness of workplace support services if none exist yet.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the results are different. You will then be able to identify if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your initiatives to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
  - What is the level of employee participation in the initiatives offered?
  - How many employees have participated in the social and emotional wellbeing initiatives offered (e.g. subsidised massage)?
- Can you see that managers and employees have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - Is there evidence of managers considering social and emotional wellbeing issues (e.g. when developing rosters)?
  - What are employees saying about the changes that have been made (e.g. that they feel less stressed, more confident, more empowered to seek assistance)?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - What percentage of employees are aware of how they can access support services for social and emotional wellbeing issues?
  - What percentage of employees know where to go for support in the workplace if they have a social and emotional wellbeing issue?
  - Has the percentage of employees accessing support services changed since the implementation of your program?
  - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from

[www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



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A simple guide to evaluation



# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

## Juicy Isle, Tasmania

Juicy Isle is a Tasmanian owned and operated food manufacturing and distribution company located in Cambridge, near Hobart. The family-owned company, in operation since 1971, employs approximately 90 people, mainly in blue collar occupations.

Juicy Isle recently helped one of its young employees, Brodie, to make some lifestyle changes that have significantly contributed to his wellbeing.

While seeking full-time work and receiving unemployment benefits, Brodie had worked occasionally as a casual employee in the Juicy Isle warehouse.

After negotiations with Workskills (a community-based employment services provider), Juicy Isle employed Brodie full-time in its warehouse about three years ago. As Brodie had not worked consistently for some time, there were some initial adjustments necessary to help him make this transition.

Brodie's manager, Anne, took Brodie 'under her wing', and gave Brodie the start he needed to help him on his way. Anne and Brodie were able to have a difficult conversation that was necessary so that Brodie's hygiene and appearance would be acceptable for the workplace.

Anne soon noticed improvements in his attitude and productivity.

Having not held down full-time employment before, Brodie's financial management skills were also minimal. With some help from the company's finance manager, Brodie learnt skills that enabled him to budget his wages on the important spending areas, such as groceries and bills, without using credit. Brodie used the simple method of creating envelopes for each area of spending and allocating the necessary cash to each envelope every time he was paid. This helped Brodie to reduce his debts and eliminate the use of credit, putting him in control of his spending.

With these two areas of his life vastly improved, Brodie sought to make positive changes in his health as well, eating more nutritious foods and participating in regular physical activity. Brodie was able to purchase healthy foods from the on-site cafeteria, and soon decided to start running. Over time, Brodie reduced his weight by over 20 kg.



From a simple conversation with his employer, Brodie was able to turn his life around. The impact on his workmates and his young family has been dramatic. This no-cost intervention has also potentially created a long-term Juicy Isle employee which will save the business money by reducing costs associated with advertising for and retraining new staff.

'Not only did Brodie turn his life around, but Juicy Isle has gained a valuable employee, and I, as his manager, feel a great sense of satisfaction seeing what Brodie has achieved,' said Anne.

'I am really grateful to Juicy Isle for giving me a go when it seemed like no one else would. I really like working here and I hope I will stay here for a long time – I owe so much to this company. Don't ever let yourself give up – there is nothing you can't do or can't accomplish.' – Brodie



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can assist you with information around social and emotional wellbeing and related issues.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they can provide, download the following resource from this CD-ROM

or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Where to go for more information -  
Social and emotional wellbeing



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# 06E SMOKING

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I address smoking in my workplace?
- What can I do to address smoking in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section of the Healthy Workplace Resource Toolkit, we look at how you can address smoking in your workplace.



# WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

A **smoke-free worksite** can bring many positive benefits, for both employers and employees.

**For employers**, benefits include:

- increasing productivity through:
  - reduced absenteeism from smoking-related health problems
  - reduced presenteeism (employees performing poorly due to attending work when they're not well)
- meeting 'duty of care' responsibilities towards employees, clients and visitors
- generating a positive corporate health image
- reducing the risk of litigation from non-smokers who may develop health problems related to passive smoking
- lowering the risk of workers compensation claims from smoking-related health problems
- potentially reducing fire risks, resulting in lower insurance costs
- complying with legislation including the *Public Health Act 1997* and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*.

**For employees** (both smokers trying to quit and non-smokers), benefits include:

- being able to work in a smoke-free environment, which helps to reduce the number of cigarettes employees consume daily and lowers the overall rate of smoking in the workplace<sup>6, 7, 8, 9, 10</sup>
- having access to a support program, known to help people cut down or stop smoking<sup>11</sup> while improving health, life expectancy and financial wellbeing
- a more pleasant and safer working environment for non-smokers, with protection from the harmful effects of environmental tobacco smoke (the chemicals and toxins released whenever someone smokes a cigarette)
- potentially creating fair working conditions between smokers and non-smokers, as it is generally perceived that smokers take more work breaks than non-smokers.

## Smoking fast facts

- In 2011-2012, the rate of smoking amongst Tasmanian adults was 23.2%, significantly above the national average of 18.1%. Smoking rates were higher amongst males (28%) compared to females (18.6%).<sup>1</sup>
- Tobacco smoking costs Australia over \$30 billion a year in health, business and social costs. The costs to business alone are over \$5.7 billion.<sup>2</sup>
- Smoking is the single greatest cause of preventable death in the developed world.<sup>3</sup>
- Smokers' health problems can impact on their work performance and affect productivity through more frequent sickness-related absences.<sup>4</sup>
- Several years of research shows that cigarette smokers have a higher incidence of health problems and a lower life expectancy than the general population. Smoking causes a range of serious health problems including cancer, heart disease, stroke, asthma, emphysema, vascular disease and damage to most body organs.
- 82% of Australians support measures to ban smoking in the workplace.<sup>5</sup>
- Tobacco smoking not only affects the smoker directly, but has a range of negative health impacts on non-smokers exposed to tobacco smoke. Legislation exists to protect non-smokers from the effects of 'second-hand' or environmental tobacco smoke.



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# WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

For more information on the health effects of smoking for both smokers and non-smokers, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## Health effects of smoking

*In Tasmania, there are laws* to make sure that employees are protected from the effects of environmental tobacco smoke. Organisations must comply with the requirements of the *Public Health Act 1997*, which prohibits smoking in all indoor and some adjacent outdoor areas. In addition, the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* requires employers to provide a safe working environment for employees.

For more information on legislation around smoking in the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



## Smoking-related legislative requirements



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

*There are two main things you can do* to address smoking in your workplace:

1. Develop a smoking cessation support program for your employees
2. Create a smoke-free worksite policy, where the worksite
  - ☐ has designated smoke-free areas, or
  - ☐ is a totally smoke-free environment.

*Whether you do one or both of these things* will depend on the needs of your organisation. Regardless of the approach you take, keep the following points in mind:

- Nicotine is widely recognised as an addictive substance and can cause significant health and social problems to people addicted to smoking. Physical and emotional symptoms of nicotine withdrawal can happen when opportunities to smoke are restricted, so it will be important to provide information and practical support for employees who might be having trouble not smoking during work hours.
- If your organisation decides to create a smoke-free worksite policy, there are benefits to supplementing this with a smoking cessation support program. A supportive attitude from managers and colleagues, along with access to smoking cessation support, is likely to encourage smokers who want to quit, and is likely to improve cooperation and compliance with the policy.
- To promote goodwill, and provide employees with the opportunity to trial symptom management options before smoking restrictions occur, develop and implement your cessation support program at or before your policy implementation date.
- Some smokers may see the introduction of a smoke-free worksite as an opportunity to cut down or even stop smoking. Other smokers might be encouraged to think about their own situation if they are given good information about the benefits of quitting.



Research suggests it is more effective to introduce a totally smoke-free environment with no designated smoking areas.<sup>12</sup>



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS SMOKING IN MY WORKPLACE?

## 1. Developing a smoking cessation support program for your employees

*There is no 'one size fits all' approach to smoking cessation.* You can consider a range of strategies to support your employees, depending on what best suits your workplace.

For more information about developing smoking cessation support programs, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Smoking cessation support

## 2. Creating a smoke-free worksite policy

*A smoke-free policy is a formal, written document* addressing the issues relating to smoking in your worksite. A formal policy that has been endorsed by managers will:

- provide clear direction to all employees as to why their worksite has become a smoke-free environment
- make it clear what is expected of both the organisation and all employees
- let all staff and visitors know that the organisation takes a firm stance on the issues of smoking and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

For more information about developing a smoke-free worksite policy, including a fact sheet, sample templates, brochures, a sample media release and No Smoking signage, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)

The following table lists examples of strategies and activities that may be useful to address smoking in the workplace. Remember, aim for a mix of activities that target people, place and policy.



Guidelines for developing a smoke-free worksite policy

	Examples of activities targeting smoking	People	Place	Policy
👍	Display information on the health effects of smoking and the benefits of quitting smoking		✓	
👍	Provide promotional material on smoking cessation options (for example, QuitLine)		✓	
👍	Develop a smoke-free worksite policy			✓
👍	Offer flexible working hours to allow employees to attend smoking cessation courses	✓		
👍	Promote and provide access to online smoking cessation support programs		✓	
👍+	Arrange in-house support groups for employees attempting to go smoke-free	✓		
👍+	Support participation in smoking cessation programs during work hours	✓		
👍+	Provide smoking cessation support programs in the workplace	✓		
👍+	Subsidise smoking cessation support services and/or medications for employees (for example, nicotine replacement therapy)	✓		

This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.



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# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

*The best way to find out if your program has been a success* is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start your program, for example:

- What percentage of employees currently smoke?
- How many cigarettes do they smoke?
- Do they smoke at home, work or both?
- Are your employees motivated to quit smoking?

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and its objectives. For example, if the majority of your employees smoke at home and not at work, then it may be a higher priority to focus on smoking cessation, rather than implementing a smoke-free policy.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the figures are different. Then you will be able to identify if your program has been effective, or whether you need to change your program to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding and acceptance of your smoke-free policy (if you have one)?
  - Are employees and site visitors aware of the policy and its requirements?
  - Does your signage get your message across (e.g. do you have the right number and type of signs, are they still in place and legible)?
  - Is there staff support for the policy?
  - Are site visitors aware of the policy?

- Are your employees making good use of the support offered as part of your program?
  - What is the level of employee participation in your program?
  - How many employees have taken up nicotine withdrawal support (if that option was provided)?
- Can you see that employees and visitors have accepted the requirements of your policy and/or program?
  - Is there evidence of smoking on site (e.g. cigarette butts have been found, employees or visitors have been seen smoking)?
  - What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they will comply with its requirements?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - Has the percentage of smokers changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - Has the average cigarette consumption changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

## Port Arthur Historic Site, Tasmania

The Port Arthur Historic Site set a new benchmark in workplace health and visitor comfort when it became the first major tourist attraction in Tasmania to go smoke-free on 1 November 2011.

Carol Armstrong, the Human Resource Manager who had been responsible for planning the change, said the move was inevitable.

'Our visitor feedback regularly showed negative comments about smoking on the site. We also wanted Port Arthur to be a place where staff and visitors were safeguarded from the health effects of passive smoking, and the environment was not degraded by litter.'

Previously, staff and visitors had been able to light up whenever they wanted. Now there are two designated smoking areas (including one in the carpark), and smokers are only permitted to smoke during their award rest breaks.

Ms Armstrong said as well as being a worksite, the site was also a family environment. School and educational groups were regular visitors, so it made sense to present healthy behaviour models. 'With the World Heritage listing in July last year, we also considered it important to follow best practice.'

Some staff had expressed concerns about telling visitors to 'butt out', but Ms Armstrong said education sessions and role-play had been helpful to practice a polite approach to the situation. There was also an emphasis on informing visitors as much as possible, with signage on site, verbal advice at the ticket counter,



and information on tickets and in brochures.

Port Arthur Historic Site employs 130 permanent staff, with an additional 40 in peak tourist season. For the staff who were smokers, support was provided to help them manage their smoking, or use this as an opportunity to quit altogether.

Staff have access to a subsidy of \$250 for nicotine replacement therapy for up to three months, with the local medical centre and pharmacy on board to provide advice, support and the subsidised smoking cessation products. These products manage cravings during work hours and assist smokers who want to stop smoking.

An employee has been trained to deliver smoking education groups, and Quit group sessions were run in February – an opportune time to coincide with New Year's resolutions, but after the disruption of the festive season.



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?



'We understand that this is a very difficult addiction to give up and therefore our approach is one of support and education.'

Ms Armstrong said that the nature of Port Arthur differed from many other workplaces because there were external as well as internal stakeholders to prepare for.

The other Historic Sites managed by the Management Authority – Cascades Female Factory and Coal Mines at Saltwater River – became smoke-free in July 2012.

In offering advice to others, Ms Armstrong said 'I've learned it takes much longer than you'd think. It's more than just putting up a sign. It takes leadership, commitment and perseverance to make it happen, but there are very good reasons to go smoke-free and the Board and Executive were one hundred per cent behind it all along.'

While there was some resistance from a handful of staff during the policy implementation period, the majority of employees were strongly supportive of a smoke-free worksite, and resistance largely evaporated after introduction of the policy.

A resource kit to support implementation of the smoke-free policy, provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, proved useful in planning the change.

Union workplace delegates provided valuable input into the development of the policy, and were not opposed to the policy introduction.

If you would like more information on making your workplace smoke-free, contact the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Service on **1300 366 322** or visit [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can assist you with smoking cessation programs and information for employees.

For a list of these organisations, their contact details and the services they can provide, download the following resource from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Where to go for more information - Smoking

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# 06F ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

## Key questions to ask

- Why should I address alcohol and other drugs in my workplace?
- What can I do to address alcohol and other drugs in my workplace?
- How do I know if our program has been a success?
- How have others done it?
- Where can I go for more information?



In this section, we look at a range of issues around alcohol and drug use in the workplace.



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# WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN MY WORKPLACE?

*The consumption of alcohol and other drugs* both during and outside of work hours can have a damaging impact on employee health, productivity and workplace safety.

*Nationally, nearly 9% of employees drink alcohol while at work*, while almost 1% of employees use drugs while at work.<sup>1</sup> This is more common in particular industries, including hospitality, construction and financial services. Tradespeople and unskilled workers have been identified at being of greater risk of consuming alcohol and drugs while at work.<sup>1</sup>

Research also shows that specific industry groups have a larger proportion of employees who generally drink alcohol at levels associated with harm. These include hospitality, agriculture and mining, with tradespeople and unskilled workers again identified to be at greater risk.<sup>2</sup>

*A large proportion of the Australian workforce* also engages in work-related drinking, for example, socialising and drinking after work.<sup>2</sup> In some organisations and industries this is a well-established routine and may not necessarily be a problem if safer levels of drinking are established as the social norm. Friday night drinks, for example, can be an excellent networking or team-building opportunity or a great chance to unwind.

*While there is no safe level of alcohol consumption*, the National Health and Medical Research Council has issued guidelines<sup>3</sup> for alcohol consumption that may reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm (see *What are 'safer' levels of alcohol consumption?*).

*Excessive consumption of alcohol or other drugs* is linked to a wide variety of health and social problems, including accidents, injuries and violence in the short-term and liver disease, brain damage and social isolation in the long-term.<sup>4</sup>



Is your workplace in one of the recognised high-risk industries?



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## What are 'safer' levels of alcohol consumption?

The National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines<sup>3</sup> state:

- to reduce the risk of alcohol-related harm over a lifetime, drink no more than two standard drinks on any day
- to reduce the risk of injury on a single occasion of drinking, drink no more than four standard drinks on a single occasion
- that for young people aged under 18 years, drinking alcohol is not advised. The initiation of drinking should be delayed for as long as possible for this age group.

These guidelines apply to both men and women.

The guidelines also state that for women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

*Besides alcohol, there are many other drugs* that may impact on safety and performance if taken while at work, or if their effects are still current while an employee is at work. These include:

- illicit drugs (such as cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine, heroin and other morphine derivatives)
- prescription drugs (such as tranquilisers or pain medication)



# WHY SHOULD I ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN MY WORKPLACE?

- over-the-counter medications (such as anti-histamines or cold and flu remedies)

or

- any combination of these.

Combining alcohol and other drugs can also lead to increased risks or unpredictable behaviour.<sup>5</sup> For example, alcohol can magnify the effect of sleeping pills, tranquilisers, cold remedies and cannabis.

**Possession and use of illicit drugs is illegal** and may lead to heavy penalties including prison sentences. The use of these drugs in the workplace is not acceptable.

**Prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications are not usually a concern for employers**, and most employees would not need to notify their supervisor if taking these drugs. However, side effects from some of these drugs can result in symptoms such as drowsiness, which may be of concern when people are operating heavy machinery, driving or working at heights. It may also be of concern if employees are using medication prescribed for someone else. Employers should promote open communication with employees so that potential impacts of medication on workplace safety can be identified, and so employees can be encouraged to consult with their doctor regarding alternate medications if appropriate.

**If one of your employees has an alcohol or drug problem**, they may:

- have impaired job performance, including higher-than-usual rates of mistakes or inefficiencies
- have increased absenteeism
- have poor time-keeping skills
- show changes in concentration and energy
- have sudden mood changes
- be increasingly tired at work.<sup>6</sup>

There may also be signs of decreased morale or cooperation between employees.

**From a company-wide perspective**, you need to be alert to signs of alcohol or other drugs being kept on the worksite. This may be in the form of employees displaying risky behaviours, or even employees having disciplinary or conduct problems. You also need to be aware of legal responsibilities and implications if your company knows that employees are using illicit drugs.

**It's important to recognise** that these signs can be related to other illnesses or even stress, and may have nothing to do with alcohol and drug use.



Is there a culture or history of alcohol and drug use in your workplace?

For more information on the effect of alcohol and drug use in the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



The effect of alcohol and drug use in the workplace

There is no common stereotype of someone who is using alcohol or drugs inappropriately. Investigate a matter fully and cautiously before coming to any conclusions.



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# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN MY WORKPLACE?

**There are many factors** that may cause someone to use alcohol or drugs at an inappropriate level. Using alcohol and drugs can make us feel better at coping, help us unwind or make us forget concerning issues. Workplace-specific factors that can contribute to an employee using alcohol or drugs may include:

- tight deadlines
- shift work
- job insecurity or uncertainty
- workplace changes.



Are these factors present in your workplace?

Personal factors can also contribute to the use of alcohol or drugs, including:

- stresses resulting from relationship difficulties
- family or personal illness
- financial pressures
- difficulty sleeping.

For more information on these issues, see Section 06D *Social and emotional wellbeing*.

**Employers can adopt a wide range of strategies** to deal with potential alcohol and drug issues. These may involve general preventative measures around reducing alcohol or drug consumption, or more specific strategies that address identified issues. Early intervention for alcohol and other drug problems is always preferable.

The following table lists some example strategies that may help you address alcohol and drug issues in your workplace. Remember, it's a good idea to use a mix of activities that cover people, place and policy.

	Examples of activities targeting alcohol and drug issues	People	Place	Policy
👍	Identify and address factors in the workplace that may be contributing to the inappropriate use of alcohol and other drugs		✓	
👍	Display information on safe alcohol consumption guidelines		✓	
👍	Display information on the effects of illicit and prescription drugs		✓	
👍	At work functions where alcohol is provided, also provide food and non-alcoholic drinks		✓	
👍	Offer a safe travel alternative after functions where alcohol has been consumed (for example, 'Cabcharge' vouchers)	✓		
👍	Include information on safer levels of alcohol consumption in other health and wellbeing messages		✓	
👍	Refer employees to the Tasmanian Drug and Alcohol Service for information, advice, counselling and referral to treatment services (Ph: 1800 811 994)	✓		
👍	Develop a workplace alcohol and drug policy			✓
👍+	Provide in-house information sessions on low-risk drinking behaviour	✓		
👍+	Provide in-house information sessions on the effects of illicit and prescription drugs	✓		
👍+	Encourage employees to self-refer to the Employee Assistance Provider (EAP), where available	✓		
👍+	Refer employees to specific alcohol and drug treatment programs	✓		
👍+	Provide assistance to employee family members with alcohol and other drug issues	✓		



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This symbol indicates an easy or low resource activity.



This symbol indicates a more comprehensively resourced activity.

# WHAT CAN I DO TO ADDRESS ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS IN MY WORKPLACE?

The workplace is an ideal environment in which to run effective alcohol and drug support programs. Workers have a better chance to recover from alcohol and drug problems while they are still working, and the peer support network within a workplace can help shape individual behaviour.<sup>7</sup>

*One of your strategies might be to develop and implement* an alcohol and drug policy. This is a formal written document, developed in consultation with employees, that outlines what a workplace expects of its employees with regard to alcohol and drug use. It also outlines what employees can expect of their employers with regard to alcohol and drug issues if they arise in the workplace.

For more information on creating an alcohol and drug policy for the workplace, download the following resource from this CD-ROM or from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Alcohol and drug policy

## What are the issues around confidentiality and helping employees?

*It is important that you and your employees* are aware of confidentiality issues surrounding the identification of alcohol and drug problems. Employers have a duty of care to protect the privacy of individuals in this circumstance,

and if confidentiality or trust is breached, employees may be reluctant to engage in seeking help in the future.

*Sometimes it may seem obvious* that one of your employees has an alcohol or drug problem, while another employee may go to great pains to hide the issue. Either way, alcohol or drug problems need to be treated with sensitivity and care. Put aside all judgements and preconceived opinions and deal with the facts. Recognise that there may be many factors that influence behaviour, and only some of these can be directly managed within the workplace.

*If you are unsure of how to handle the issue*, ask for help from your Human Resources department, or check the *Where to go for more information – Alcohol and other drugs* fact sheet.

## What about alcohol and drug testing?

*There is growing interest* in alcohol and drug testing as a strategy for managing workplace alcohol and drug issues. There is a range of testing programs, including pre-employment screening, random testing, and testing following an accident or near miss. Ideally, the primary aim of a testing program is to identify employees that pose a safety risk to themselves or others as a result of alcohol or drug use.

*Alcohol and drug testing may have limited application* in some worksites. For example, many testing programs are restricted in their ability to test for impairment. A positive drug test may only indicate that the individual has been exposed to a specific drug at some time in the past, not that the individual is currently under the effects of that drug. Conversely, a negative alcohol test does not detect the effects of a hangover, which may be just as likely to impair workplace safety or productivity.

Testing can also be expensive and may impact adversely on employee morale when used as a random method on non-drug using employees. Employees may see testing as a breach of trust and privacy. Alcohol and other drug testing must always be voluntary in the workplace.

In general, the effectiveness of workplace testing in deterring alcohol and drug use and improving workplace safety is controversial.<sup>8</sup>



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# HOW DO I KNOW IF OUR PROGRAM HAS BEEN A SUCCESS?

The best way to find out if your program has been a success is to look at the impact of any changes you have made to your worksite. It's a good idea to work out how you are going to do this early on, so you can ask the right questions and collect the right information.

It is essential to collect some information before you start your program, for example:

- What percentage of employees currently consume alcohol at levels that may be exposing them to alcohol-related harm?
- What percentage of employees regularly choose to have alcohol-free periods?
- What percentage of employees use illicit drugs?
- What percentage of employees use legal drugs illicitly?

This data will only be useful if it matches your program and its objectives. For example, if the majority of your employees report drinking at high levels on sporadic single occasions, it may be more useful to concentrate on this as a health issue.

The baseline data you collect will be essential when you come to evaluate your program, as you can ask the same questions and see whether the figures are different. Then you will be able to identify whether you need to change your program to provide better support to your employees.

There are many questions you can ask that will help you evaluate your program, including:

- Is there understanding among your employees of the health consequences of alcohol consumption?
  - Are employees aware of the national guidelines for reducing alcohol-related harm?
  - What levels of alcohol consumption do your employees feel is safe?

- Are your employees aware of the support offered as part of your program?
  - What is the level of employee participation in your program?
- Can you see that employees and visitors have accepted the requirements of your alcohol and drug policy (if applicable)?
  - Is there evidence of alcohol or other drug consumption on site (for example, empty packaging)?
  - What are employees saying about the policy and the expectation that they comply with its requirements?
  - Is there any resistance to the policy?
- What has been the effect of the program on employees?
  - Has the percentage of employees that consume alcohol at levels that may be exposing them to alcohol-related harm changed since implementation (needs baseline data)?
  - What do your employees think about the program (do they think it has been effective)?

How you collect this information will differ depending on your organisation's size and regional spread. There is a range of data collection methods that you could try, such as surveys, interviews and discussion groups. Be mindful that this information is very personal in nature, and getting accurate results may be difficult. You will need to ensure confidentiality, which may make an employee survey the most reasonable approach.

For more information on evaluating your program, download the following fact sheet from

[www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



A simple guide to evaluation



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# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?



## Ronald Young and Co Builders

Ronald Young and Co Builders are a family-owned and operated residential building company. In business since 1970, the company has 10 full-time employees based in Hobart, and engages around 50 contractors for a variety of projects. Since taking over 18 months ago, new owners Paul and Lisa Burnell have taken staff health and wellbeing seriously.

Working in the construction industry, Paul and Lisa recognise that alcohol consumption can be a potential issue in the workplace. As Lisa is also a trained nurse, she understands the practical necessity of caring for employee health.

*'As a family-oriented business, we genuinely care for the wellbeing of our staff.'*

*Lisa Burnell, owner  
Ronald Young and Co Builders*

One of the first tasks Lisa undertook as a new owner was to create a drug and alcohol policy and a safe driving policy. These policies were developed using templates from **WorkSafe** Tasmania and WorkSafe Victoria. Along with other policies which aim to minimise hazards and improve safety, these policies state that there is a zero tolerance of alcohol or drugs for employees when driving, while working for or representing the company.



A healthy workplace is good for business

# HOW HAVE OTHERS DONE IT?

Importantly, the drug and alcohol policy also states that the privacy of the individual is to be maintained at all times if a breach of this policy is detected.

Work-based social or training events always have a low focus on alcohol. For example, at team get-togethers, low-alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks are served, along with plenty of healthy food options. Limiting the length of time of these events also encourages employees to head home, rather than continue to socialise where alcohol is served. Traditional Friday night drinks are rare – company culture encourages Friday evenings as family time for employees.

The company also has two special functions per year, to say thank you to staff for their contributions. Again, alcohol is a low focus for these events, and it is recognised that there is shared responsibility between the employer and employee for safe transport after these events.

With the assistance of WorkCover's Health and Wellbeing Advisors, Ronald Young and Co have also made great progress in supporting their staff to eat well and keep hydrated. Paul, Lisa and their employees participate in and are committed to their health and wellbeing program.



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# WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

There are several organisations that can assist employers and employees with information on alcohol and drug use in the workplace.

For a list of these organisations, download the following resource from [www.worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au)



Where to go for more information – Alcohol and other drugs

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