



**Best Practices and Strategies
for
Weight Management:
*A Toolkit For Large Employers***

**Washington Business Group on Health
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Introduction

More than 60% of adults in the United States are overweight or obese, and about 13% of children and adolescents in this country are seriously overweight. Obesity is one of the major forces driving increased healthcare costs; it also impacts workplace productivity and time lost from work.

The nation's obesity epidemic poses a challenging problem with no easy answers. This toolkit – **Best Practices and Strategies For Weight Management: A Toolkit For Large Employers** – was developed by the **Washington Business Group on Health** to disseminate useful information to companies on the best practices employers are currently using to help employees manage their weight.

Based on interviews conducted with employers that have launched programs at the workplace to address overweight and obesity issues, this toolkit highlights some of the weight management programs and strategies that employers implemented. Additionally, it includes a resource section with suggestions and lists of additional programs that large employers may consider implementing to support their employees in their weight loss efforts and encourage their employees to adopt healthier lifestyles. The first section – *Weight Management Programs and Strategies: Employers Talk About What Works* – captures the feedback from employers interviewed and presents the programs that they found to be effective.

Each employer who receives this toolkit is encouraged to review the included weight management programs and strategies, and select those that are most suitable for their industry, workforce, and financial position. Similarly, each individual who wishes to lose weight must choose among available programs based on their own personal needs and desires, social situation, health status and readiness for change.

Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP)/Whirlpool

Program Overview

The Whirlpool Corporation is enthusiastic about the **Coronary Health Improvement Project (CHIP)** developed by Hans Diehl, DrHSc, MPH. Whirlpool has about 23,000 employees in North America – 4,000 of whom are in its headquarters office in Benton Harbor, Michigan. The Benton Harbor worksite started offering the CHIP program in 2001, when employees requested it. (They are currently exploring ways to make it available in the divisions as well.) The program uses a series of video tapes and discussions led by trained, certified facilitators to educate people about lifestyle changes – particularly a strict low-fat diet and exercise regimen – to improve health.

Costs

\$300 per person, half of which is subsidized by the company for employees.

In addition to subsidizing the cost of the CHIP program, Whirlpool also offers participants a \$75 annual fitness rebate to cover half the cost of aerobics classes, gym membership, or Weight Watchers. The chef at Whirlpool attended the CHIP classes and is preparing at least one healthy entree per day.

At Whirlpool, the CHIP program is offered as a six-week class, two nights a week for three hours each night. Topics include exercise, the optimal diet, dietary fiber and fat, self-worth and behavioral change. CHIP is available to employees, spouses, and retirees.

One of the major strengths of the CHIP program is its broad focus. It is designed to function as a community-based program, with corporations, hospitals, schools and faith communities participating in a concerted effort to increase broad public awareness of healthy lifestyles. In Benton Harbor, for example, the local hospital has also been involved in the program.

The CHIP Program Outcomes

At Whirlpool, one person lost 15 pounds and reduced cholesterol from 740 to 170.

At an eight-week program at six employers in Rockford, IL, the average weight loss was 9 pounds and the average BMI decline was 1.4.

Acknowledgements

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The Business Group would like to especially thank Michael Davis – of General Mills and Chairman of the Business Group Board – and Dr. Vince Kerr of the Ford Motor Company for their leadership in the Business Group's new Institute on the Costs and Health Effects of Obesity. In December 2003, Dr. Kerr chaired the Business Group's Summit on Obesity, Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes, which was the foundation for the creation of the Institute on the Costs and Health Effects of Obesity. The Business Group also would like to thank the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau for their support and work addressing obesity-related issues over the past year and enabling a thorough assessment of the problem.

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