

The next generation of employee
health screenings



Problem

Lack of understanding and fear can be hazardous to your health. Not all health risks, such as high blood pressure, are associated with symptoms and can go undetected for years, which may result in unfortunate yet preventable consequences.

Why is it so important that people are diligent about getting regular preventive health screenings? Did you know...?

- 25.6 million or 11.3 percent of adults age 20 and older have diabetes. 7.0 million of those children and adults with diabetes are undiagnosed.¹
- About 35 percent of U.S. adults age 20 years or older, or 79 million people, currently have pre-diabetes.²
- High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke.³
- Being overweight or obese increases the risks of coronary heart disease, ischemic stroke, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and some common cancers.⁴
- Lifestyle changes in diet and exercise, including a 5 percent to 7 percent maintained weight loss and at least 150 minutes per week in physical activity, can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes for Americans at high risk for the disease.⁵

The challenge for organizations is that many people who are unhealthy are unaware of their risk because they either avoid preventive checkups and screenings or take a passive role in their health. This doesn't bode well for an organization's health-care-related costs and employee productivity — both crucial to the bottom line.

Solution

Healthy employees are more likely to be productive and engaged, so progressive business leaders offer their employees wellness programs. The average return on investment (ROI) for seven studies reporting costs and benefits was \$3.48 for every dollar expended.⁶

Before engaging in an on-site program, it's important to do your homework and find the right wellness solution to fit your organization's needs. A good way to gauge the health of your population, and to get employees involved in their own health, is to screen individuals for key health indicators of common health problems such as obesity, heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Because many people are not aware of their actual biometric numbers — or have a tendency to skew their numbers even when they do know them — screenings are an effective way to measure the health risk of your population. In contrast to self-reported information such as contained within health assessments, which might be distorted or incomplete, screenings will provide you with actual measurements.

Traditionally, organizations host a one-time annual worksite wellness screening event that helps gather this information and gets people curious about their key biometric numbers.

With good promotion and an efficient employee scheduling process, a worksite wellness event can achieve a strong turnout. But what about all of the employees and family members that are not able to attend the event? Furthermore, for employees who decide to take action on their results to improve their health, how can they determine if the positive behaviors they've adopted are actually improving their health?

Industry-leading organizations are now providing the options for those who are not able to attend worksite screening events, or those who want to follow-up with further measurements throughout the year. These organizations are enhancing their current approach to screenings with even more convenient and accessible programs. Today's generation of screenings programs include:

- On-site screenings
- At-home screening kits
- Lab screening
- Health provider screening forms
- Standalone on-site health kiosks

No matter how your employees choose to obtain their numbers, a biometric screening for health risks can produce important benefits for both you and them. In addition, each type of screening has some particular advantages — described later in this paper. The benefits common to biometric screening in general include:

- Creates awareness of health status
- Offers an engaged learning opportunity
- Increases the accuracy of your population's risk
- Improves the consumer experience

It's important to note that not all organizations will benefit from every screening delivery method. The right mix and timing for your organization must be determined. For example, large, multi-site organizations will benefit from leveraging all of the methods available to maximize the proportion of employees/dependents that get screened. Greater population participation yields stronger insights into the health risks of the population, and thus helps to determine which wellness programs will work best to reduce long-term medical costs. In addition, the year-round accessibility of these screening modalities allows individuals to be aware of their numbers throughout the year, so they are able to adjust their behaviors as needed to get the most out of their efforts.

Worksite wellness screenings

Due to costs and logistics to set up a screening event, traditional worksite screenings are ideal for organizations with locations that have at least 50 eligible participants at that location. Typically, organizations will host the screening in conjunction with an annual health fair to help generate excitement, create visibility of the organization's commitment to health and wellness programs, generate healthy peer pressure, and kick off other health and wellness initiatives. Worksite screening events are a great way to screen large numbers of people. Typically, the full screening will take 15 minutes per participant regardless of the draw method (finger stick or venipuncture, which are options and chosen by the employer). Both delivery methods will provide accurate screening results; however, immediacy of results delivered and range of biometrics collected will vary between the two draw methods.

The tests performed at worksite screenings are designed to identify common risk factors associated with high medical spend conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure. Participants are provided a copy of their personal screening results* and are encouraged to share them with their physicians to help interpret results, determine any next steps and, if necessary, plan a course of action. In cases where a person's results are in a very high-risk zone — such as an extremely elevated blood pressure — he or she is immediately directed to a doctor or to appropriate emergency care as needed.

** For finger stick events, results are provided immediately and consult at a results review station is provided. For a venipuncture event, employees will receive their individual comprehensive results in the mail approximately three weeks after their screening.*

Another program offering many organizations choose to provide their employees is a Worksite Wellness Health Coach at the screening event. These professionals can be “added on” to an existing worksite screening event (KYN “Plus”) or simply to provide a standalone resource to coach participants about simple lifestyle changes they can incorporate into their everyday routine to start living healthier today. Also, if purchased, the Worksite Wellness Health Coach will refer them to follow-up intervention programs.

A common worksite screening package measures:

- Partial lipid panel (HDL, total cholesterol (TC), TC/HDL ratio)
- Fasting or non-fasting glucose
- Height and weight (calculated BMI)
- Blood pressure

Additional available screening tests may include:

- Bone density
- Flexibility and fitness assessment
- Strength testing
- Nicotine
- Derascan for solar skin damage
- Spirometry for lung function
- Vision testing
- Hearing testing
- Waist circumference or waist-to-hip ratio
- Full lipid (includes LDL and triglycerides to partial lipid screen offering)
- A1C (diabetes test)
- Body composition (body fat percentage)

The specific benefits of worksite screenings include:

- Leveraging “event” promotion and atmosphere to engage large numbers of participants in screening
- Providing screening of large segment of targeted population efficiently
- Providing immediate availability of results to create powerful “teachable moments”**
- Interpreting results via worksite wellness health coach at review station
- Encouraging a fun, easy and exciting atmosphere to learn about health
- Helping visibly promote other wellness initiatives
- Increasing referrals to other health programs or immediate enrollment into programs (if purchased)
- Encouraging participation through healthy peer influence
- Improving morale
- Minimizing time taken away from work to participate

*** Immediate results are available for finger stick screens only.*

Health kiosks

Health kiosks are a continually visible worksite solution that can motivate employees to make healthy behavior changes year round. They provide employees with easy access to biometric data and the ability to track progress toward their health goals.

Common biometrics measured through a health kiosk are:

- Weight
- BMI (with self-entered height)
- Body fat percentage
- Blood pressure (systolic and diastolic)
- Upload of glucose measurements (via USB-enabled glucometer)
- Upload of fitness and activity information from activity monitors/pedometers
- Kiosks can be interactive and display health education information or participant-specific information from trackers. Typically, if a user's biometrics are out of normal range, a recommended action is displayed. Industry-leading vendors will then take the data recorded, upload it to the individual's Personal Health Record (PHR) and Health Assessment, and use it as a way to identify at-risk members for outreach to offer them lifestyle risk modification programs.

The specific benefits of health kiosks include:

- Provides ongoing measurement supporting wellness programs and complementing annual worksite screenings
- Helps users become aware of their key biometrics over time
- Reinforces knowledge of normal biometric ranges
- Provides convenient location at the worksite for year-round use
- Offers a visible solution promoting a culture of health and wellness
- Provides a non-invasive way to keep track of health
- Helps employees avoid time away from work for simple blood pressure measurements
- Captures measurement from employees unable to attend screening event (e.g., night shift)

"Off-site" screenings

Access to biometric screenings is a main contributor to lack of participation in these programs. The reasons can be varied, from the employee being out sick the day of the event, being remote or a telecommuter, or his or her location not being able to support screening minimums. Whatever the reason, Optum has removed the access roadblock by offering additional, convenient ways to capture the biometrics of these employees. These "off-site" alternative modalities include at-home finger stick kits, health provider screening forms, and lab visit option, which can be added to an existing worksite screen to help increase participation.

At-home screening kit

The at-home kit provides an easy and private way for an employee to administer a biometric screen from the convenience of his or her own home. Employees simply order a kit online through the dedicated registration site, conduct the screening at home through a simple finger stick, return the sample cassette in the provided return envelope, and then access their results online within 15 days. Order confirmation and follow-up reminder emails are sent to assist with increasing kit return.

Health provider screening form

The health provider screening form is another option for employees to capture biometric results who would rather visit their primary care physician (PCP) or convenience/care clinic to obtain their screen. Employees access the form through the dedicated registration site, download the printable PDF, take it to their PCP or convenience/care clinic where their results are recorded, and the form is then returned by fax.

Lab Visit

The third off-site option is the use of a contracted national lab to conduct the employee's screen. Accessing the lab order through the dedicated registration site, the employee takes the lab order to a service center during business hours, presents his or her order and photo ID, and a venipuncture screen is administered. Because of Optum's relationship with this National partner, the employee's data is transferred to Optum securely and automatically. Confirmation emails and a "find a lab" link are provided to the employee for convenient reminders and location options.

Off-site modalities truly offer convenient access for everyone, including those:

- Employees at smaller or multi-site locations
- Employees traveling or on leave during your scheduled on-site screening
- Employees who work remotely
- Employees joining the workforce at various times during the year
- Family members/dependents who are not able to come to a worksite screening or not permitted at the worksite

Common screenings for off-site modalities include:

- Partial lipid panel (HDL, total cholesterol (TC), TC/HDL ratio)
- Fasting or non-fasting glucose
- Height/weight (self-reported for at-home and lab visit)
- BMI (calculated)
- Blood pressure

Off-site screenings can be matched up to capture similar biometrics as worksite events.

The benefits of off-site screenings include:

- Increasing reach of biometric screenings
- Extending access to spouses and dependents
- Increasing the completeness of population health risks assessment
- Improving the customer experience
- Respecting the privacy of individuals in a small-business setting
- Reducing time away from work

Conclusion

Many people are not willing to make long-term lifestyle changes or even visit their doctor until they are faced with hard facts about their own personal health risk. With the average person spending 2,000 hours per year at the workplace, employer-sponsored preventive screenings are an ideal way to help people become aware of their current health status. Screening doesn't take charge of someone's health; screening helps people take charge of their own health.

Medium to large organizations have experienced the benefits of worksite screenings for years. They know it's a great way to get employees engaged in their health. With the introduction of additional screening options, organizations of all sizes now have the opportunity to benefit from this successful wellness strategy. Whether you represent a small, medium or large organization, a mix of screening options can help improve your approach to employee population wellness and create more productive, loyal and healthy employees.

Authors

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Dr. Michael Rosen is a senior national medical director for Optum. Dr. Rosen and his team are responsible for the review of virtually all clinical content utilized by Optum staff and, in many instances, are charged with development of these materials. These efforts are essential in supporting the organization's goal of assisting consumers in achieving improved health outcomes with the right provider, right care, right medication and right lifestyle. The goal of Dr. Rosen's team is to help ensure that clinical content contained within materials is up to date, relevant and aligned with UnitedHealth Group standards. Dr. Rosen also helps clinically support the Optum oncology care management programs and strategic relationships with key customers.

Dr. Rosen joined UnitedHealth Group in 1996 and has played a variety of roles across several business segments during his 15 years with the company. Dr. Rosen's postgraduate medical training was at New York University Medical School, Yale New Haven Hospital and the Yale Medical School. He also spent 2 years with the Centers for Disease Control as an Epidemic Intelligence Service officer. Dr. Rosen is board certified in Internal Medicine and Hematology and practiced these specialties for almost 18 years while in private practice in Connecticut.

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