



How Heart- Healthy Are

Montana's Worksites?



Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Montana as well as in the United States. Together, heart disease and stroke, known as cardiovascular disease, accounted for a third of all deaths in Montana during recent years. There are multiple risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Cigarette smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol are among those which can be modified by an individual's lifestyle. Montana's worksites can play an important role in helping employees attain and maintain cardiovascular health.

In 2000, the Montana Cardiovascular Health Program conducted an assessment of workplaces with at least 250 employees, as well as Indian Health Service and Tribal workplaces. Sixty-three surveys were mailed, and 48 surveys were returned (76% response rate). The standardized mail survey was adapted from New York's Heart Check Worksite Assessment and included items regarding health risk assessment and organizational structure, smoke-free environment, nutrition and physical activity programs, and health screening. Responding worksites were categorized as the following: Manufacturing/Mining (13%). Retail/Sales/Services (10%). Education (8%). Government (30%). and Health Care (40%).

If your organization responded to the survey, a personalized graph has been inserted in this report that indicates how well your organization is doing to provide policies, programs and benefits that promote cardiovascular health among your employees. We thank you for your participation in this survey.

**A total of 48 worksites responded,
the majority of which were governmental or health care organizations.**

Table 1. Characteristics of worksites responding to the survey (N=48).

	Manufacturing/ Mining (n=6) %	Retail/ Sales/Services (n=5) %	Education (n=4) %	Government (n=14) %	Health Care (n= 19) %	Total (N=48) %
Number of employees						
Less than 250	0	0	75	22	21	21
251 to 500	67	80	25	57	42	52
More than 500	33	20	0	21	37	27
Full-time employees						
Over 50% of workforce	100	100	100	93	95	96
Over 75% of workforce	100	80	25	57	37	54
Manual labor						
Over 50% of workforce	83	20	0	36	18	30
Over 75% of workforce	67	0	0	0	12	13

Many of Montana's major employers have organized efforts to help employees recognize their risk for cardiovascular disease and to promote healthy lifestyles.

Table 2. Health risk assessment and organization for wellness promotion among worksites.

	Manufacturing/ Mining %	Retail/ Sales/Services %	Education %	Government %	Health Care %	Total %
Provide health risk appraisals*	17	20	50	21	53	35
Have wellness committee*	0	20	50	29	42	31
Have wellness objectives*	17	20	50	29	42	33
Have position responsible for wellness program*	33	25	50	50	53	47

*Health risk assessment and organization items included in total score (see Table 7)

Most Montana worksites have curtailed smoking in buildings but few offer incentives for individuals to quit smoking altogether.

Table 3. Smoke-free policies and promotion of smoking cessation among worksites.

	Manufacturing/ Mining %	Retail/ Sales/Services %	Education %	Government %	Health Care %	Total %
Smoke-free work policy*						
No policy	33	0	0	0	16	10
Partial ban on smoking	17	20	0	7	0	6
No smoking in buildings	50	60	75	79	74	71
No smoking on grounds or buildings	0	20	0	7	5	6
Unknown	0	0	25	7	5	6
Offer incentives to quit smoking*	0	20	0	15	21	15
Provided cessation programs in past 24 months*	33	20	0	39	68	45
Sell tobacco products on premise	0	0	0	7	0	2

*Smoke-free environment items included in total score (see Table 7)

Vending machines are widely available, but there are relatively few healthy choices in the machines.

Table 4. Healthy food options available and nutrition programs provided by worksites.

	Manufacturing/ Mining %	Retail/ Sales/Services %	Education %	Government %	Health Care %	Total %
Vending machines available	100	80	100	86	79	85
Healthy food options available in vending machines						
2 to 5 options	50	100	75	75	73	73
More than 5 options	0	0	0	0	13	5
Cafeteria or snack-bar available	33	50	100	29	79	87
Health food options available in cafeteria or snack-bar						
2 to 5 options	50	0	25	75	14	26
More than 5 options	0	33	75	0	86	59
Offered nutrition programs in past 24 months	17	0	25	14	89	43
Heart healthy diet	17	0	25	0	78	34
Weight management	17	0	0	14	72	34
Low fat cooking	0	0	0	0	50	19
Offered incentives for nutritional programs	0	0	0	50	18	18
Offered nutrition programs in past 12 months*	0	0	25	7	68	31
Have policy requiring heart-healthy food and beverage choices at meetings and work functions	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Nutrition program items included in total score (see Table 7)

Although half of the responding worksites sponsor sports teams, few offered fitness oriented programs directly to employees.

Table 5. Fitness and exercise option provided by worksites.

	Manufacturing/ Mining %	Retail/ Sales/Services %	Education %	Government %	Health Care %	Total %
Offer discounted memberships to off-site exercise facilities*	83	20	0	50	53	48
Have on-site exercise facilities*	0	20	100	21	79	48
Provided fitness oriented programs in past 2 years*	33	60	100	29	39	43
Fitness-oriented programs offered on paid time	33	0	75	25	38	36
Have policy encouraging physical fitness	0	20	50	7	11	12
Provide incentives to employees to participate in fitness programs	0	0	0	7	11	6
Have signs to promote the use of stairs in worksite	0	0	0	23	21	15
Have outdoor exercise areas, bike racks or walking trails	40	20	75	54	47	48
Sponsor sports teams and events for employees	40	40	50	39	68	52

*Physical activity program items included in total score (see Table 7)

Health care and education worksites offered blood pressure and cholesterol screening most frequently.

Table 6. Blood pressure and cholesterol screening provided by worksites.

	Manufacturing/ Mining %	Retail/ Sales/Services %	Education %	Government %	Health Care %	Total %
Offered blood pressure screening in past 2 years*	50	75	100	43	58	57
Provide educational materials and counseling with blood pressure screenings	67	67	100	83	91	85
Arrange or provide medical follow-up for blood pressure screenings	33	33	25	17	46	33
Offer incentives for employees to maintain normal blood pressure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offered cholesterol screening in past 2 years*	50	40	100	43	65	57
Provide educational materials and counseling with cholesterol screenings	67	100	100	83	91	89
Arrange or provide medical follow-up for cholesterol screenings	67	50	25	0	55	39
Offer incentives for employees to maintain normal cholesterol levels	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Health screening items included in total score (see Table 7)

Health care and education worksites were most likely to provide supportive environments for employees to reduce cardiovascular risk.

Table 7. Mean scores for wellness program components, by component, and overall.

	Manufacturing/ Mining	Retail/ Sales/Services	Education	Government	Health Care	Total
Health risk assessment and organization	0.7	0.8	2.0	1.3	1.9	1.5
Smoke-free environment	0.8	1.2	0.8	1.4	1.7	1.4
Nutrition and physical activity programs	1.2	1.0	2.3	1.1	2.4	1.7
Health screening	1.2	1.0	2.3	1.1	2.4	1.7
Total score+*	3.7	4.0	7.0	4.6	7.1	5.6

Data are mean scores

+Total score includes 13 items (4 in health risk assessment and organization, 3 in smoke-free environment, 4 in nutrition and physical activity programs, 2 in health screening)

*P = 0.05, Significant difference in total scores between groups (ANOVA).



The Montana Cardiovascular Health Program is interested in the promotion of heart-healthy worksite environments. If you are interested in receiving more information about resources for worksite wellness, or if you have questions regarding this report, please contact Lynda Blades at (406) 444-7324 or lblades@state.mt.us.

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"As a cardiologist here in Montana, I cannot under emphasize the importance of preventing heart disease and stroke. In our state, heart disease and stroke account for one third of all deaths. This report on Montana's worksites is a first. Worksites have an important place in decreasing the risks for those catastrophic illnesses. Increased physical activity, smoking cessation, and healthy eating are key components of a heart healthy lifestyle. Heart healthy lifestyles are not just a concern for those of us who work in health care. I hope more employers will consider opportunities for Montana to become the best place for heart health."

~ Sharon Hecker, M.D.

Montana Governor of the
American College of Cardiology

The mission of the American College of Cardiology is to foster optimal cardiovascular care and disease prevention through professional education, promotion of research, leadership in the development of standards and guidelines and the formulation of health care policy.



A Note from the Governor:

“A healthy workforce is one of Montana’s greatest treasures. Forming healthy eating and physical activity habits at work is key to keeping Montanans fit. My experience as an Olympic athlete gives me a special appreciation for good nutrition and regular physical activity. Healthy lifestyles start at home with the family and continue at the worksite. This report is the beginning of my efforts to recognize the impact Montana’s employers can have on the health and well-being of their hard working employees.”

~ Governor Judy Martz

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