

### Remote, Hybrid Work Linked to More Anxiety and Depression

According to a recent report from Integrated Benefits Institute, remote, hybrid work is linked to increased anxiety and depression. Report highlights indicate:

- Workers had an increased rate of anxiety and depression symptoms if they were fully remote (40%) or hybrid (38%), compared to those who worked in-person (35%).
- Rates of anxiety and depression were higher in women (38%) than men (33%).
- Individuals with lower income and those who had difficulty meeting living expenses had higher rates of depression and anxiety symptoms.
- While the number of individuals taking a mental health prescription increased from 20% to 22% and the unmet need for counseling rose from 12% to 14%, overall symptoms of anxiety or depression fell from 40% to 35% from July 2021 to August 2022.

Sources: *HR Dive* <http://bit.ly/3SOp1yf> & *EBI* <http://bit.ly/3kL3IB3>



#### Wellness: Ideas to Engage

1. Create a Pinterest board to share recipes.
2. Offer a weekly virtual fitness or meditation class.
3. Encourage/support work-life boundaries/balance.
4. Host an online team building activity. Virtual escape rooms are fun and boost morale!
5. Treat your staff to a delivered zoom brunch.
6. Initiate a weekly walking or water-drinking challenge.

Source: *Wellies* <http://bit.ly/3y6uKWJ>

### How Employers can Avoid Discrimination Lawsuits when Offering Parental Leave

To stay competitive in the hiring market and improve employee satisfaction, employers may be considering adding a parental leave benefit. Firstly, a parental leave policy must comply with Title VII, which prohibits employment discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, and national origin. In complying with Title VII, employers can offer women additional leave, as long as the policy clearly states that leave is related to physical limitations from pregnancy, childbirth, or a related medical condition. Employers are not required to offer the same pregnancy-related medical leave to men. However, any type of leave related to bonding with or caring for the child must be offered equally to both men and women.

In the past few years, large corporations have settled lawsuits related to discriminatory parental leave policies. These can offer lessons to employers for avoiding liability in discrimination lawsuits:

- Employers must ensure the policy is applied impartially to avoid discrimination lawsuits.
- Use gender-neutral language in the policy.
- If the policy differentiates based on primary and secondary caregivers, do not presumptively treat mothers as the primary caregiver or only require fathers to provide proof that the other spouse has returned to work or is medically incapable of caring for the child before being designated as the primary caregiver.
- Do not discourage employees of a certain gender from taking advantage of the leave policies.
- If you offer additional return-to-work benefits, like temporary modified work schedules or job sharing, these policies must also be non-discriminatory.
- In formulating a leave policy, employers also need to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.

Parental leave can be a great benefit to offer employees. Whether you already have a policy in place or are thinking about adding one, following these tips will help prevent good intentions from having inadvertent consequences.

Source: *Ice Miller* <http://bit.ly/3ZI73Qh>

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## Just 11 Minutes a Day of Moderate Exercise Linked to Lower Risk of Early Death

Across all ages, it is never too late to start being active the benefits of being active accrue very quickly.

While the CDC recommends 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, half of all adults in the U.S. do not get that amount. However, a new meta study shows that half that amount, 75 minutes of moderate exercise per week, can lower one's risk of overall mortality than people who were not active.

Moderate exercise includes hiking, walking briskly, cycling to work and playing with your children. As a general rule, moderate activity is anything that elevates your heart rate while still allowing you to maintain a conversation. *NBC News* <https://nbcnews.to/3SjpuYZ>

## Stats: How Employee Tobacco Use Impacts Your business

- Smokers average 31% more sick time taken compared to those who do not smoke.



- Smoking is one of 2 factors that cause

losses in productivity AKA "presenteeism" (on the job but less effective due to poor health). The other factor is heavy drinking.

- In 2022 a tobacco using employee costs a business about \$8000 more per employee than a non-user in absenteeism, presenteeism and health care costs.

- Fire Insurance costs can drop 25% – 30% when a workplace goes smoke free.

- A pack a day habit is estimated to cost employees \$250,000 over a lifetime of smoking, a dramatic negative impact to an employee's personal bottom line. This does not include any increased health care costs due to smoking.

- Cigarette smoking causes 1 of every 5 deaths annually in the US. *Source: EBN* <https://bit.ly/3yaXz4o>

## Compliance Alert: RxDC Reporting

Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Self-Funded Health Plans and Health Insurers have been required to report Rx cost and healthcare spend to the CMS since January 2023 on plans beginning 2020. Recent updates now require cost share information, including employer/employee premium contributions, on fully-insured employer health plans. Please look for requests from your health insurer if you have a fully-insured health plan. Some insurers have a March deadline, but each insurer appears to have their own schedule.

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