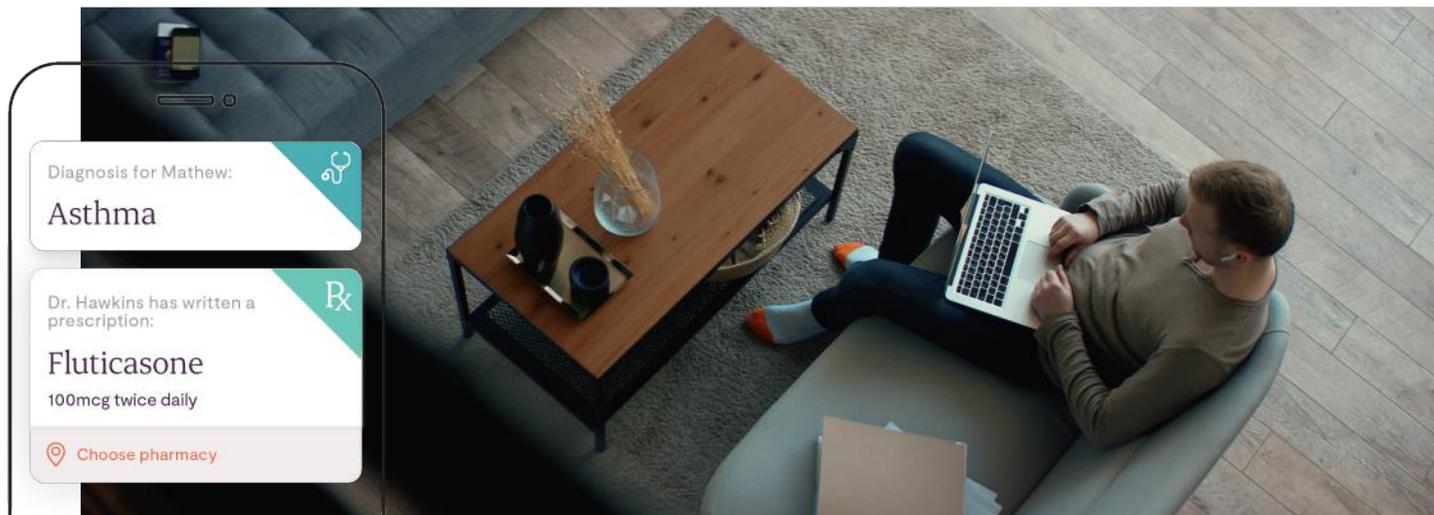


Four pillars to build a company culture of health and well-being



As the modern workforce continues to evolve, all organizations, big or small, can benefit from creating a culture of health and wellness. To achieve this, workplaces should view health not simply as the absence of medical problems, but as a state of holistic physical, mental, social, and financial well-being.

According to HR experts, these are the four main pillars of health and well-being that should be considered to inform a corporate wellness strategy. By prioritizing these, employers can create a well-rounded culture that can benefit both the organization and its employees.

Employee health and wellness: the four pillars

1) PHYSICAL

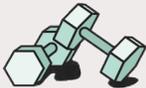
The pressures of work and life can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of your employees. Over time, these pressures can lead to chronic illnesses and preventable health episodes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, more people have been taking sick days from work due to illness, stress, disability, or other medical problems. Studies have shown that in 2020, the average number of people out sick was equivalent to about two weeks lost.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges, it's also made it clearer to see how the physical, mental, social, and financial components of health are all interconnected.

For Canadians, the pandemic has meant more time playing video games or watching television, drinking often, difficulty sleeping, and negative changes to activity levels and diet. ¹

Encouraging employees to find ways to be physically active can help prevent numerous health issues. Employer initiatives to promote physical health can cover everything from nutrition, to exercise, to doctor's visits. Something as simple as offering a virtual meditation or fitness class, or even at-home equipment can function as a catalyst. It can encourage your employees to get into the rhythm of fitness by trying something new, or turning an occasional activity into a dependable habit.

FOUR WAYS YOU CAN PROMOTE EMPLOYEE PHYSICAL HEALTH:



Virtual meditation or fitness classes



Team step challenges and encouraging walking meetings



Preventative health screenings at work to assess health risks



Hiring a yoga instructor, fitness coach or dietician for a session at work or virtually

To maximize usage, companies should also think about how these four ways to support employees could best be integrated into their day-to-day lives. Through simple interventions, companies help employees foster new repeatable habits.



2) MENTAL

Mental health issues bring about significant costs for companies in the form of short or long-term disability, employee absenteeism, and productivity loss. When a person works under mental stress, quality and effectiveness of work suffers. Moreover, relationships suffer both at work and at home, which could negatively affect workplace culture. Internalized stress and anxiety can lead to burnout, chronic pain, tension, gastrointestinal disorders, and chemical changes in the brain.

Canadians are certainly feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health. Uncertainty, isolation, stress, major changes in daily routines, job losses, and the lack of separation between home and work have all created challenges.

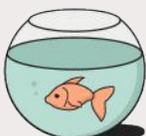
SOME IMPORTANT STATISTICS TO CONSIDER:



One in 20 of the general Canadian population have suicidal thoughts ²



50% of Canadians report a worsening of their mental health, with 10% overall saying it has worsened “a lot” ⁴



Three in 10 employees suffer from severe stress, anxiety, or depression ³



Mental health has declined in 44% of women, and 32% in men in 2020 ⁵

Despite all the resources and supports made available to employees today, cost, stigma, accessibility, and anxiety are still significant barriers for mental health treatment. Approximately one in five Canadians will experience a mental health issue in any given year, and only half get the help they need. Companies should explore implementing training for managers at all levels so that they're able to identify employees at risk of burnout, stress or anxiety, while HR should put in place tools that can help employees navigate the resources available to them.

Virtual care and other digital mental health programs are well-positioned to tackle these issues as the solution to allow patients to access a wide variety of mental health providers, regardless of the patient's location. Moreover, insurers have reported significant reductions in the duration of absences when internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy was available to employees.



3) SOCIAL

Social well-being refers to how an employee thinks, feels, and relates to the people around them. Employees are looking for ways to connect with others, share values, have a sense of belonging, and derive fulfillment from work, which all impact their social well-being.

Celebrating birthdays, organizing team events, emphasizing peer support, and recognizing individual successes can all positively impact how employees view work. When employees receive recognition from both their peers and the organization, their sense of purpose and commitment to work improves.

42% of employees don't have a close friend at work. ⁶

A strong bond between employees benefits both the organization and its team. Research has shown that employees who have a close friend at work are more likely to be happy and engaged. Feeling a sense of belonging has also been shown to lead to a higher level of life satisfaction and overall mental well-being, resulting in an intrinsic motivator that drives engagement and productivity.



As workforces become increasingly remote, it's important to ensure that employees have plenty of opportunities to connect and develop meaningful bonds with others. These can include;



Dedicated talk spaces



Virtual community coffee breaks



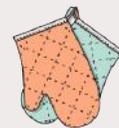
Weekly gaming sessions



Team movie nights



Virtual running clubs (or other mutual interest groups)



Cooking classes – live or virtual!

4) FINANCIAL

According to a 2020 report on National Health Expenditure Trends, Canada's total health spending is expected to reach \$265.5 billion, or \$7,064 per Canadian. Moreover, the Conference Board of Canada released a study at the end of 2020 that showed that healthcare costs were on the rise in Canada, with COVID-19 as a new cost driver.



With healthcare expenditure on the rise, there is a clear need for usable and accessible healthcare benefits to avoid incurring costs associated with acute, chronic, and mental health. Otherwise, employees may choose to avoid treatment for economic reasons, resulting in exacerbated medical issues, stress, and productivity issues at work, and creating a risk of disability leave, which are costly for employers.

HERE ARE SOME TRENDS IN HEALTH SPENDING IN CANADA:

- In the latter half of the last decade (2015 - 2020) health spending per capita increased, by an average of 1.2% per year.⁷
- A report on [Health Care Cost Drivers in Canada](#) confirms that healthcare costs are increasing year after year, and the federal contribution to health care is not keeping pace.
- Healthcare inflation is projected to account for about 46% of the total increase in healthcare costs between 2019-20 and 2030-31 and nearly 49% of the increase between 2030-31 and 2040-41.

Financial security with healthcare can benefit your organization in many ways: lower absenteeism, higher productivity, better use and appreciation of your employee benefits programs, and improved morale. Employees will feel more in control of their money, which will have a positive impact on their mental and physical well-being. Virtual care is one way employers can provide accessible solutions to their employees to avoid ongoing costs. It's a benefit that provides strong value to both employers and employees, helping relieve some of the financial burden of healthcare on individuals.



Employee health and well-being is becoming a key priority for employers as the business case becomes increasingly clear. If companies want to stay competitive, they need a talented workforce. When it comes to attracting and retaining top employees, a vibrant health and wellness culture is a huge differentiator.

Holistic health and wellness initiatives promote healthy bodies, healthy minds, and a healthy company culture. By helping employees take care of their physical, mental, social, and financial well-being, organizations can raise productivity, lower absenteeism, improve employee morale and benefit in a myriad of other ways.



See why hundreds of Canadian employers are integrating Maple into their wellness strategy. For more information, visit getmaple.ca/business or contact us at sales@getmaple.ca

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- 4 — Angus Reid Institute, "Worry, Gratitude & Boredom: As COVID-19 affects mental, financial health, who fares better; who is worse?" <https://angusreid.org/covid19-mental-health/>
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- 6 — O.C. Tanner Institute, "2018 Global Culture Report" https://au.res.keymedia.com/files/file/HCA/HRD_2018_Global_Culture_Report_Compressed.pdf
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