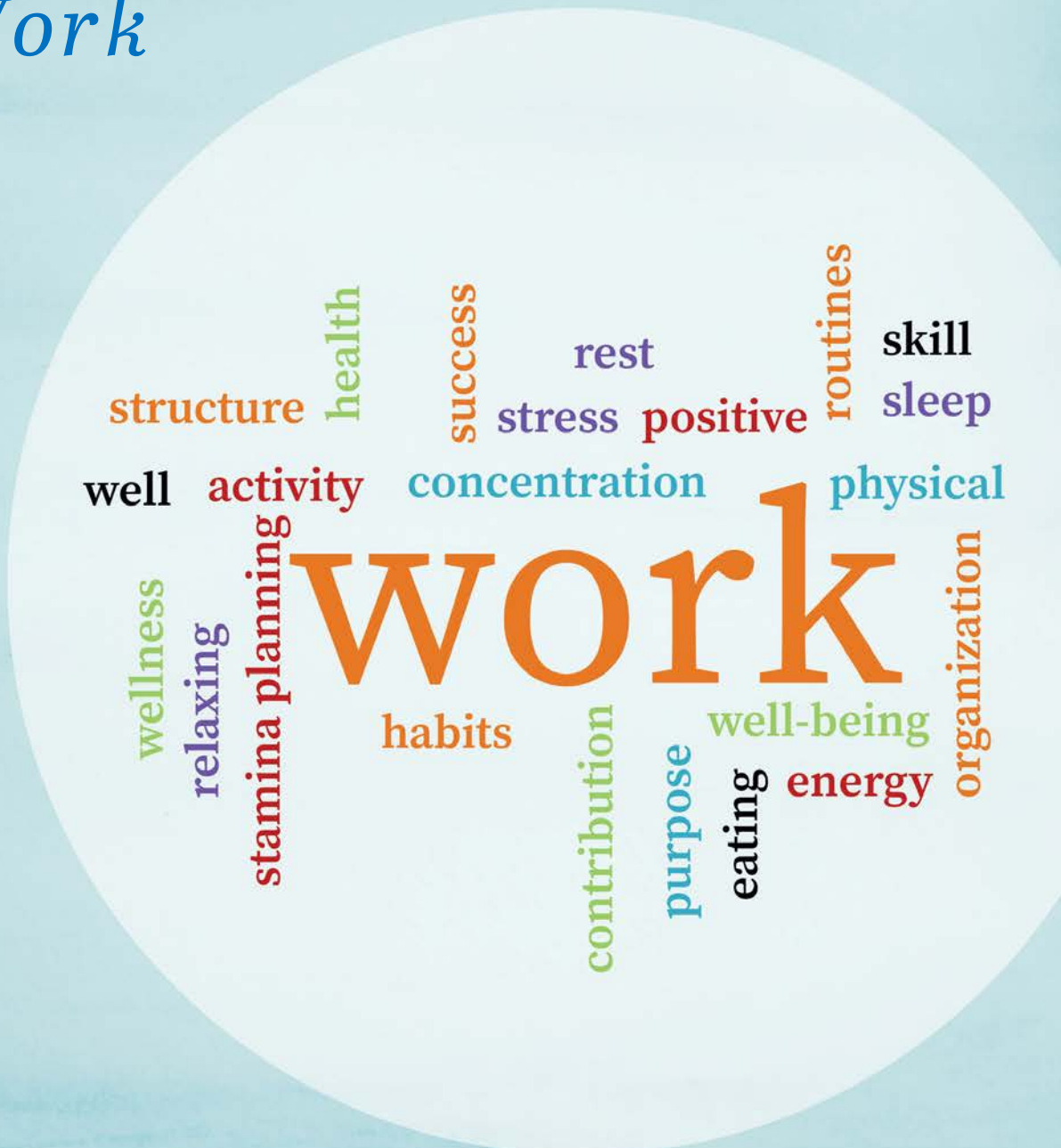


Physical Wellness

for Work





Physical Wellness for Work

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Physical Wellness	4
Habits and Routines.....	5
Sleep and Rest.....	7
Physical Activity.....	9
Relaxation & Stress Management.....	11
Eating Well.....	13
Medical Care & Health Screenings.....	15
Strengths Summary	18
My Physical Wellness for Work Plan.....	19

Introduction



Work provides people with structure, a sense of purpose, and feelings of accomplishment. It also requires physical energy, stamina, and concentration, even if you only work a few hours a week. Many people who are working or looking for work don't realize how much physical wellness contributes to employment success.

Physical wellness habits include daily practices such as healthy eating, getting enough sleep, being physically active, managing stress, and taking time to relax. Going to the doctor, taking prescribed medications, and dealing with any medical conditions you have are also very important. Focusing on these habits can build routines that support your success at getting and keeping a job.

We created this manual for a project in which people were receiving employment services to help them obtain work and remain successfully employed.¹ We noticed that people needed ways

to identify and establish physical wellness habits that supported their employment goals. They benefitted from information, tips, and suggestions for enhancing their health and stamina as they searched for work, landed jobs, and developed their careers.

We designed this manual to help you explore areas where your physical wellness habits are already strong and identify areas where you might want to improve. The manual can be used on your own, or with employment service providers, job coaches, other service providers, family, and friends.

^[1] Cook, J.A., Steigman, P.J., Swarbrick, M., Burke-Miller, J.K., Laing, T., Vite, L., Jonikas, J.A., Brown, I. (2022). Outcomes of peer-provided individual placement and support services in a mental health peer-run vocational program. *Psychiatric Services* <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.20220134>. For a free electronic copy email center4healthandsdc@gmail.com.

Physical Wellness



Physical wellness involves choosing to do things that contribute to your health, energy level, and concentration. Sleeping well, staying active, and making healthy choices are all very important. Physical wellness also includes taking steps to avoid becoming ill, getting regular health screenings, and going to the doctor when medical attention is needed. These are all important for people like yourself who want to work.

Let's start with how you describe your physical health. (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Next, think about your typical day, from the time you get up until you go to bed. List the activities you do each morning, afternoon, and evening on a typical day.

Morning activities:

Afternoon activities:

Evening activities:

How many hours a day do you work or plan to work?

How many hours a week do you work or plan to work?



Habits and Routines

A habit is an automatic behavior—something you do without thinking. This could include having a regular bedtime, eating a healthy lunch, or getting some exercise each day. When you are a worker, it is important to have health habits that help you prepare for your workday, travel to your job, be productive, and structure your free time after work to include rest and relaxation.

Routines are collections of habits that provide structure for your day. A healthy morning routine for a worker might involve waking up at a consistent time, eating a healthy breakfast, and leaving for work early enough to arrive on time

without feeling rushed. A healthy routine for someone who is looking for work might include getting enough sleep the night before a job interview, having a nutritious snack on the way to the meeting, and taking a walk afterwards to relieve stress. Creating physical wellness routines can help you to begin your day well-rested and ready to work, and be productive even when your work is challenging. Having a wellness routine if you're looking for work can help you get to job interviews promptly, manage any nervousness you feel, and maintain the concentration to answer questions and present yourself well to potential employers.

Think again about your typical day and check the items below that apply to you.

- I have daily habits that help me accomplish my goals.
- I have habits that help me get ready to start the day.
- My habits help me structure my daily activities.
- I have habits that help me during stressful times.
- I can identify habits that make me successful as a worker.
- I know which of my habits could be a challenge in the workplace or looking for work.
- I use a nightly routine to prepare me for sleep.
- I have a regular bedtime on work days.

TRY THIS!

Starting a new job? This podcast describes how to start new health habits at the same time.

<https://bit.ly/2wZ7LwM>

Ideas for Wellness Habits that Support Work

1. Think about different routines that will get your day started, and help you arrive at work or a job interview on time, well-rested, and ready to put your best foot forward.
2. Organize your workday around your natural clock. For example, perform difficult job duties at times when you are most alert. Try to schedule job interviews for the time of day you are most refreshed and able to concentrate.
3. Whether at home or on the job, organize your workspace so you know where things are when you need them, and devote a few minutes each day to organizing your work space for the next day.
4. Replace unhealthy habits with new positive and healthy ones, especially when the pace is hectic. For example, bring a healthy lunch instead of grabbing fast food on busy days. Bring a snack of nuts or peanut butter for a quick energy boost on days where things are hectic at work, or you have multiple job interviews.
5. In the evening, set out the next day's clothes, lunch, keys, transportation money, or other needed items so they are ready for the next day.
6. Having a routine for winding down as the day ends can help to ensure that you get enough good quality sleep so that you awake refreshed and ready for work the next day.

Strengths

What habits do you have now that help you (or would help you) succeed at work?

What habits do you have now that might get in the way of doing well at work?

If you wanted to, what are some things you could change or improve about your habits, to help you do well at work?



Sleep and Rest

Sleep is a natural state of rest for the mind and body. Most people need 7-8 hours of sleep nightly. Others can function on 6 hours or less, while still others need 9 hours or more. Rest involves reducing your activity level and mental concentration to create a quiet and effortless state. To get good rest, you need to lessen both your physical and mental activity. These health habits are important because holding a job or looking for work requires adequate sleep and rest. To achieve this, many highly productive people have a consistent sleep and wake time each day. They also take time throughout the day to rest and recharge their bodies and minds.

Being well for work requires the right amount and type of sleep and rest so that we can:

- Get up early enough to do whatever is needed and still get to work on time.
- Remain awake and alert throughout the entire workday, with enough energy to do the job well.
- Take care of activities that must be completed before bedtime while taking time to wind down enough to fall asleep easily.

How would you describe quality of your sleep? (circle one)

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Check all the items below that apply to you:

- I go to bed around the same time every night.
- I wake around the same time every morning.
- I do things to relax my mind and body each night before bedtime.
- I wake up in the morning feeling rested.
- I feel alert and able to concentrate most of the day.
- My energy level is adequate for the work my job involves.
- My energy level is stable throughout the workday.

On average, how many hours do you sleep each night?

Your typical sleep schedule is from

(time you go to bed) _____

(time you get up) _____

Ideally, how many hours of sleep do you need to be able to work well the next day?

_____ hours

Ideas for Improving Your Sleep and Rest

1. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Keep at it until it happens naturally. It's also ok if you want to wake up earlier on workdays than you do on the weekend. Whatever schedule you choose, having a regular wake and sleep time can help you get the most out of your sleep and start the workday well-rested.
2. Make your room as dark as possible. Close the shades or blinds. Turn off laptops, television, and other electronics that give off light when not in use. Better yet, keep your sleep area free of these electronic devices. Avoid the urge to check your email, visit websites, or use social media apps close to bedtime.
3. Minimize distractions by turning off the television, computer, and phone at least an hour before bedtime. If you feel tempted to check work or job search emails right before bedtime, try to resist that urge. Having work issues on your mind can make it hard to fall asleep or your sleep can be interrupted.
4. Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing, stretching, or taking a warm bath to rest your mind before bedtime.
5. Keep your living and especially your sleeping space clean and organized. This can make it easier to fall asleep and can support your morning routine when you awaken. Some people like to lay out their clothes, set up their grooming products, or get the coffee/tea making supplies ready for when they wake up.

Strengths

List some things you're already doing to help you get a good night's sleep.

List some things that get in the way of you getting a good night's sleep.

If you wanted to, what are some things you could change or improve about your sleep and rest, to help you do well at work or looking for work?

TRY THIS! Use a simple sleep diary to track your zzzzzzzz

<https://bit.ly/3ePQ1xb>



Physical Activity

Physical activity is any body movement that works your muscles and uses more energy than you use when you're at rest. Most jobs and the job search process require some level of physical activity and all jobs require attention and energy. Your morning routine and the activities you perform on the job are impacted by how physically well you feel. Taking time during the workday to do something active with

your body can help alleviate stress, boost your energy, and clear your mind. This might be a short walk outside (if possible) or in your workspace. Or it could involve exercises or stretching at your desk or wherever you work. It can be helpful to set a silent alarm to remind you to move around several times during the day both at work and at home.

On a typical day, how would you describe your level of physical activity?

Very active Somewhat active Not at all active Very active

What do you do now for physical activity?

How many days a week do you engage in 30 or more minutes of physical activity?

_____ days

If you exercise, how long do you exercise, on average?

_____ minutes

What types of exercise or physical activity do you enjoy?

If you're working, how could you add short periods of physical activity several times during your workday?

Check all the items below that apply to you:

- I have the physical strength needed to do the kind of job I have or want.
- I have the energy I need to do the kind of job I have or want.
- I have the physical flexibility I need to do the kind of job I have or want. For example, I'm able to bend down and touch the floor, lift objects weighing 5 pounds or more, or stand for 30 minutes or more.
- I am able to complete my job tasks without getting tired or worn out or I feel able to complete the job tasks of the job I want without feeling tired or worn out.

Ideas for Increasing Your Physical Activity

1. Walking is an easy and inexpensive way to increase your physical activity. You can use break time to take a brief walk. You can use the stairs instead of an elevator as you travel throughout your day.
2. Start slow and increase gradually. You might decide to walk 5 or 10 minutes once or twice a day, a few days each week, for the first couple of weeks or month.
3. Once you have a schedule and feel comfortable and confident, pick up the pace, like increasing how long or how fast you walk. Or try taking a slightly longer route when you are walking somewhere.
4. Try doing different physical activities. Variety will prevent boredom and keep you motivated. Standing, stretching, and balancing on one leg can all be done at most jobs or at home.
5. Choose activities for balance, strength, and flexibility as well as for building your stamina and endurance. Many exercises that increase flexibility and balance can be done sitting in a chair or in a small space like your office, cubicle, or living room. Taking the stairs and increasing the number of flights you climb is a good way to build stamina.
6. Try increasing your physical activity during your commute to and from work, or when job searching. If you take a bus or train, try getting off one stop earlier to add steps to your commute.

Strengths

What physical activities do you already engage in that support your work or desired job:

If you wanted to be more physically active, what new activities could you add at work or to prepare for getting a job?

TRY THIS! Use a dance video to put some fun in your workout!

<https://bit.ly/3RlxC4b>



Relaxation & Stress Management

Stress is an automatic physical, mental and emotional response to feeling threatened or pressured. It usually happens when we're in a situation we feel we can't manage or control. **Stress management** includes things you do to help you cope with or reduce pressures at work or outside of work. No matter what kinds of jobs we have or want, stress happens and can interfere with our performance. The challenge is being able to identify and manage stress.

Different aspects of our work may be stressful, like having a big project due, or working during busy

periods, or being evaluated by your supervisor. Those of us who are looking for work may find that creating resumes, filling out job applications, and being interviewed are stressful. Our lives outside of work also can cause stress that impairs performance. So, it is important to focus on what helps you to manage stress and feel calm and relaxed enough to perform our job duties or do well during job interviews. **Relaxation** is the refreshment of the body and mind, and may include activities that provide entertainment and a diversion from your daily tasks that help you manage stress.

Think about how well you manage stress right now and circle one of the following.

Very well Somewhat well Not well at all

What sources of stress do you experience at work and/or outside of work?

How do you manage the stressors you listed above?

Check all of the items below that apply to you:

- I do not let simple things bother me.
- I handle criticism well.
- I laugh and joke with others.
- I practice positive self-talk.
- I know when to take a break from work tasks or home chores.
- I consciously practice some form of relaxation.

Ideas for Relaxation and Stress Management

1. To manage work related stress, use a calendar and “to do” list to keep track of your tasks and responsibilities. Using a "to do" list also can help you manage the job search process, since it usually requires multiple tasks. Prioritize work tasks so you are tackling the most important things first, keeping relevant deadlines in mind. Then, schedule tasks in your calendar, giving yourself enough time to complete them. You'll feel more in control knowing what you will work on and when.
2. Do something every day that makes you laugh and lifts your spirits. This might include calling a friend who has a good sense of humor, reading jokes or humorous articles, or watching a funny TV show. Remember, laughter has positive physical benefits such as increasing oxygen in your blood, decreasing stress hormones, and reducing pain.
3. Make time during your day to do a positive activity for your health and mood. Pick something you enjoy doing that clears your mind. Try deep breathing, yoga, meditation, or mindfulness to help you connect with your inner self and stay centered. These are practices that you can do anywhere, including work.
4. Be positive and friendly toward people at work, even those who annoy or challenge you. The act of smiling has been shown to improve people's mood, so paste a smile on your face and observe how it changes the atmosphere.
5. Use positive thoughts and positive talk in place of negative thinking to lower your stress level as you react to a situation. Take a moment to clear your mind before you respond to others can help you feel more in control.

Strengths

What do you do now that helps you to manage stress?

When you think about work, what stresses you now or might cause you stress in the future?

What are some things you might change about how you manage stress and get the relaxation you need to do well at work or your job search?

TRY THIS!
Relax with this workplace
stress busters podcast!

<https://bit.ly/3RYqgJs>



Eating Well

Eating well includes having regular meals with “healthy” foods, such as lean meats, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. It also means trying to reduce or limit the amount of caffeine, sugar, or so-called “energy drinks” that can make you feel jittery or cause your energy level to “crash” when the effects wear off.

Because work schedules vary, the mealtimes you choose can affect how you feel and how much energy you have at work or when looking for work. Even if

you don’t like breakfast, eating a piece of fruit or breakfast bar before you begin your day gives your body the energy it needs to carry you to lunchtime. If you resist the temptation to avoid skipping lunch, especially on busy workdays, you’ll give your body the fuel it needs to finish out the workday. Paying attention to what you eat for lunch and snacks, and bringing healthy food and drinks to work, or when you go on job interviews, can support you throughout your day.

How many glasses of water do you drink each day? _____

If working, how many glasses do you drink at work? _____

How many servings of fruit do you eat each day? _____

If working, how often do you snack on fruit at work? _____

How many days a week do you get takeout or eat in a restaurant? _____

If working, how often do you bring your lunch to work? _____

How many caffeinated drinks do you have each day?
(Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, energy drinks,
and many types of soda like Coke & Pepsi.) _____

If working, how many caffeinated drinks do you consume at work? _____

How many sugary drinks do you have each day on average? _____

If working, how many sugary drinks do you consume at work? _____

What are some meals and healthy snacks you could pack for work? _____

Check all of the items below that apply to you:

- I have breakfast or eat something healthy before starting any work.
- I make time for lunch, even on hectic workdays.
- (If working) I bring my lunch to work on most days.
- I eat moderate portion sizes at lunch, so I don’t feel sleepy in the afternoon.
- I choose healthy snacks like fruits or nuts instead of sweets or chips.
- I rarely eat late in the evening, so I get enough sleep for the next day

Ideas for Eating Well at Work

1. Eat a healthy breakfast, especially on those days you expect your work to be busy or stressful. Even if you don't like breakfast, choose options you can tolerate, such as protein bars, fruit, nuts, yogurt, or smoothies. This is an especially important routine to give you the energy and stamina you need to start your day.
2. Bring your lunch to work or when you're out looking for work to save money, motivate you to take time for lunch, and ensure you get the nutrients you need.
3. Keep healthy snacks on hand at work or when job searching to avoid the temptation to buy unhealthy alternatives such as coffee or sweets.
4. During the workday, avoid sugar and limit caffeine to keep your energy level steady, without peaks and valleys. A typical workday requires sustained energy over several hours. Concentration can also be affected if you feel drowsy.
5. Decrease your intake of sugary beverages such as soda and sweetened iced tea. Avoid caffeinated drinks including energy beverages. Both sugar and caffeine affect the way we feel and our ability to maintain our focus at work or during the job search.
6. Since most of your time is spent outside of work, try to eat healthy throughout the week and on weekends to improve your overall health.

Strengths

What are some things you already do to eat healthy at work or when you're out job searching?

What are some things you could change or improve about how you eat at work or during your job search?

TRY THIS! Rate your diet with one picture (worth a thousand words!)

<https://bit.ly/3qDGgF3>



Medical Care & Health Screenings

Medical care and health screenings are an important part of staying well and being healthy enough to perform your job or look for work. Knowing medical test results such as your cholesterol level and blood pressure can help you to better monitor your overall physical health. Some jobs require a physical exam, vaccinations, or other health check-ups before starting work. This indicates your employer’s expectation that you be in good health and are up-to-date on preventative care prior to being hired. Also, if you want to request a reasonable accommodation due

to any disability you have, a health care provider can supply the needed documentation.

Once hired, you’ll also want to stay healthy by getting routine medical, dental and vision care, and health screenings, such as mammograms or prostate exams, on an ongoing basis. By staying healthy at work, you create a positive impact on your organization. Developing healthy habits can help improve your productivity and work performance, helping both yourself and your employer. Being healthy is also required when looking for work.

Do you have a primary care doctor or other regular source of medical care?	YES	NO
Do you have a dentist?	YES	NO
Do you have an eye doctor?	YES	NO
Do you know of a place to get free or low-cost medical care and screenings?	YES	NO
If you have health insurance, do you know what medical care and screenings are covered, and whether you have a co-pay?	YES	NO

Screening	Month/Year
Annual physical	
Dental Exam	
Eye Exam	
Blood Pressure Check	
Blood Sugar Check (Glucose)	
Cholesterol Level Check	
Other recommended testing* or check-up (specify)	

*Examples of beneficial screening tests include hearing test, colonoscopy (after age 50), mammograms and PAP test (for women), prostate exams (for men). Certain medical conditions or medications require regular medical follow up, such as blood tests.

Medical Care & Health Screenings

List your current medications:

List your current health conditions:

Check all of the items below that apply to you. Keep in mind that these preventive services can help you stay healthy enough to work now and in the future.

- I make sure to get a physical exam once a year and have my blood pressure, blood sugar, weight, and cholesterol checked.
- I have a yearly eye exam and can access new eye glasses/contact lenses when needed.
- I have a yearly dental exam and get cleanings at least two times per year.
- I know my numbers (blood pressure, weight, blood sugar, and cholesterol).
- I see my gynecologist and follow through with recommended exams once a year.
- I have a list of all the medications I take, including the dosages.
- I know my family's medical history and any diseases they may have had or have.
- I am able to access specialized health care if needed (podiatry, urology, endocrinology).

Ideas for Staying Well

1. Carry the phone numbers of your doctor and dentist. If you need to make an appointment or ask an important question, it is a good idea to have these numbers available if you are at work or away from home.
2. Make a list of questions before attending a medical, dental, or vision care appointment. If you are diagnosed with a medical condition, get the answers to these questions:
 - Do any medical problems I have prevent me from working or looking for work?
 - If so, what should I do about this? Will I need reasonable accommodations at work to manage this condition?
3. If you are nervous about seeing a doctor or dentist, ask someone to go with you to help you keep your appointment and feel supported. A person you trust could also help you to write down important information or instructions the health care provider may give.

Strengths

What are you already doing for preventive health care? For example, have you been to the doctor or done any screenings in the past year?

What are some things you could choose to change or improve related to medical care and health screenings?

TRY THIS! Use this handy Health Passport to understand & keep track of your medical test results

<https://bit.ly/3S0pqvQ>



My Physical Wellness for Work

Strengths Summary

As you read through this manual, you were asked to note things you're already doing that can help you find, get, and keep the kind of job you want. Copy these **strengths** into the chart below to remind yourself what healthy habits you can build on if you want. It's OK if you don't have strengths in each wellness area. You can start to develop those strengths if you want to.

Wellness Area	Physical Wellness Strengths
Sleep & Rest (from page 8)	
Physical Activity (from page 10)	
Relaxation & Stress Management (from page 12)	
Eating Well (from page 14)	
Medical Care & Health Screenings (from page 17)	



My Physical Wellness for Work Plan

Create a plan to improve your physical wellness for work by doing the following.

- Pick the wellness area you want to work on first. Keep in mind any strengths you already have in that area to build on.
- Describe the changes you will make in the **How I Want to Improve** column. Be as specific as possible using numbers, dates, times, and even examples. Limit yourself to one or two changes.
- Describe how improving this area will help you get a job or be more successful at your work in the **Impact on My Work** column. Be specific.

- Finally, list any support you want from others (e.g., family, employment staff) and any resources you'll need to be successful (e.g., alarm clock, lunch bag) in the **Supports or Resources I Need** column.

Remember to **start small** by picking just one or two wellness areas to work on. Also, limit the number of changes and remember to *be specific* when you describe them. Try to build on any strengths or routines you already have in that area. Good luck!

Wellness Area	How I Want to Improve	Impact on My Work	Supports or Resources I Need
Sleep & Rest			
Physical Activity			
Stress Management & Relaxation			
Eating Well			
Medical Care & Health Screening			

Physical Wellness

for work

THANK YOU FOR TAKING
THE TIME TO READ THIS
GUIDE. WE HOPE YOU FOUND
THE INFORMATION HELPFUL!

