Better Together
Tips to reduce your client's employee sick time.

When your employees take days off sick it can cost your organization money for a number of reasons; you may need to hire extra staff, offer overtime rates to cover the absence and comply with your sick pay policies.

With these factors in mind, it is important to help your employees remain as healthy as possible and lower the likelihood of them needing to take time off from work.

Back Pain

Back pains, and other musculoskeletal conditions, are amongst the most commonly stated reasons for employees taking sick leave. In order to limit the chance of your employees sustaining back pain while sitting at their desks, ensure that they are applying the following advice where possible:

- *Keep your mouse right next to your keyboard to avoid overreaching and twisting your body into an awkward position.*
- *Adjust your screen to meet your eye level so that you are not straining your upper spine through leaning forward.*
- *Position your knees directly over your ankles, this will ensure that your spine is kept upright.*
- *Avoid sitting cross legged as this position prevents you from keeping your spine straight.*

To encourage staff to follow these steps, implement regular desk checks or distribute a guide detailing good and bad seated positions for posture.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

A repetitive strain injury can occur when the same movement is performed repeatedly, leading to pain in the muscles and tendons which are being used. The risk of developing RSI is increased for individuals who have poor posture, are under stress and are regularly exposed to cold temperatures.

Carrying out risk assessments on employee workstations can decrease the likelihood of staff taking time off work due to RSI related aches and pains. You should also ensure that all members of staff understand how RSI can be sustained and how to avoid it; namely by taking regular breaks and stretching any tense or achy muscles. If employees are told how to identify RSI, they can take preventative action before long term damage is caused

The Importance of Frequent Breaks

Allowing your employees to take a break for a couple of minutes each hour will give them the opportunity to stretch and also rest their eyes. A simple walk around the office can help any body parts which have been under stress to relax and relieve eyes from the strain of looking at a computer screen.

You could also provide staff with a few exercises which will help to ease any muscle tension and prevent aches and pains. Exercise tips for employees:

- *Roll your shoulders backwards and forwards in a steady motion.*
- *Allow your arms to hang by your sides and shake out your hands.*
- *Cover your eyes for a few seconds and focus on a point in the distance.*
- *Bend down to touch your toes.*
- *Gently push your hand backwards and forwards to stretch wrists.*

Promote a Healthy Lifestyle

Encouraging your staff to live healthy lifestyles can lower the number of employee sick days. By providing information about how employees can boost their immune systems, and helping them to follow the advice, you can lower the chances of your workers catching common colds, sore throats and a number of other illnesses.

- ***Nutrition*** *– Educating employees about which foods they should be eating to stay healthy could persuade them to introduce more immune system boosting foods into their diets. Providing some of these healthy options in the office will give staff the opportunity to eat them and boost morale.*
- ***Exercise*** *– Offering a reduced gym membership as an employee benefit often motivates staff to work towards a healthier lifestyle. You could also try to organise yoga classes or post-work runs to get people involved in a fun group exercise.*
- ***Smoking*** *– Although many people who smoke are not looking to quit, there may be some people within your business who would love to give up the habit and just need some support. Through providing motivation to those who would like to quit smoking you could lower the risk of them calling in sick due to chest and throat related illnesses.*
- ***Stress*** *– Help employees to understand how to manage their workload and provide support to those who are struggling - this will lower the likelihood of them taking time off for stress related illnesses.*

Educating your employees on the importance of staying healthy and supporting them in implementing the changes they should make in order to achieve this, will eventually result in a lower absence rate within your company. This will not only save your business money, but also provide you with a happy and motivated workforce.

Source: https://www.internationalworkplace.com/blog/how-to-reduce-sick-leave-in-your-workplace-52823