

To learn more about our worksite wellness programs, visit [www.ibx.com/worksite\\_wellness](http://www.ibx.com/worksite_wellness)

Summer  
2009

## Highlight on Health — Chester County employees “lose it” in weight loss challenge

More than 250 Chester County employees rose to the challenge set by the County’s Employee Wellness Program, losing more than 1,450 pounds in 12 weeks. Hosted by the Chester County Healthy Lifestyle Employee Wellness program and ACAC Fitness and Wellness Center of West Chester, “Losing it at Chester County” was part of a comprehensive program of wellness activities offered to Chester County employees.

The challenge placed a focus on eating better, moving more, and maintaining an appropriate weight. Employees formed teams, paid a registration fee to participate, and attended biweekly weigh-ins and education sessions at several county offices. Funds raised through the registration fees were used as prizes for the top three weight loss teams.

“The Wellness Planning Committee wanted to implement a weight loss challenge that would engage our employees in thinking about positive lifestyle changes,” said Melissa Walsh, spokesperson for the Chester County Healthy Lifestyle Employee Wellness committee.

“In addition to the monetary incentive, employees have appreciated the support the team concept brings and have been motivated by the scheduled weigh-ins,” added Walsh.

According to the Chester County Department of Health, approximately 56 percent of Chester County adults are overweight or obese, and 43 percent are actively trying to lose weight. Weight loss incentives in the workplace can help, as this is where most adults typically spend half or more of their waking hours.



Congratulations to the District Divas from District Court 15-1-01! Margaret Butts, Mindy Whitmer, and Carol Hanson won the challenge with a weight loss percentage of 11.53%.

### Page 2

*Health observances  
New tools for wellness programs  
Free podcasts from MyPyramid.gov*

### Page 3

*Keep on walking  
Newest Wellness Partners  
Cost of presenteeism*

### Page 4

*Avoiding the stings and bites of  
summer bugs*

In addition to the weight loss challenge, Chester County’s wellness program encourages employees to adopt healthier behaviors through participating in work-based walking groups, growers markets, “lunch-n-learn” presentations and health screenings throughout the year.

The Weight Loss Challenge has been successful for a variety of reasons. Karen Flurer, in the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, says, “I have been motivated by the scheduled weigh-ins. It’s more difficult to tell myself I’ll just put off dieting until next week when I know there’s a date I need to weigh in. It also helps to have the support and motivation of the other people going through the same thing.”

For information on running a weight loss challenge at your worksite, please contact your Independence Blue Cross health promotion coordinator.

## Health observances

### July

Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month – [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)

### August

National Immunization Awareness Month – [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)

### September

Leukemia & Lymphoma Awareness Month – [www.lls.org](http://www.lls.org)

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month – [www.ovarian.org](http://www.ovarian.org)

Prostate Cancer Awareness Month – [www.fightprostatecancer.org](http://www.fightprostatecancer.org)

### October

Healthy Lung Month – [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month – [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org)

National Depression Screening Day, October 8 – [www.mentalhealthscreening.org](http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org)

### November

American Diabetes Month – [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

Lung Cancer Awareness Month – [www.lungcanceralliance.org](http://www.lungcanceralliance.org)

Great American Smokeout, November 19 – <http://acsf2f.com/gaso/>



## New tools help you plan a wellness program

Additional resources have been added to [www.ibx.com/worksite\\_wellness/implementation\\_tools/links.html](http://www.ibx.com/worksite_wellness/implementation_tools/links.html) to help you find resources for your wellness programs. The resources are listed in a new and easy-to-use format to help you find county, regional, and national organizations that offer information, presentations, and more on a variety of health topics.

Please contact your Independence Blue Cross health promotion coordinator with any questions about these resources.

## Free podcasts from the United States Department of Agriculture

MyPyramid.gov, a website of the United States Department of Agriculture, offers numerous podcasts that show how small changes in what you eat or how active you are can add up to a big difference in your health and weight. Video podcasts are also available.

Audio podcasts available include:

- Choosing Fruits and Vegetables;
- Nutrient Dense Foods;
- Vegetarian Options;
- The Skinny on Milk;
- Snack Attack;
- Smart Choices at the Deli Counter;
- Easy Lunch Box Ideas;
- Physical Activity – Do Something Fun.

For more information or to listen to one of the podcasts, visit [www.mypyramid.gov/audiopodcasts/index.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/audiopodcasts/index.html).

## Keep on walking

On Wednesday, April 29, 2009, more than 10,000 people in the Philadelphia region turned a working lunch into a walking lunch during IBC's second annual National Walk @ Lunch Day.

Several IBC customers joined in the Center City walk, including the City of Philadelphia, the School District of Philadelphia, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, SEPTA, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Tierney Communications, plus many more. The North Penn School District reported that it had 1,300 walkers join in the fun.

While National Walk @ Lunch day is just one day, a new and free online program allows your company to promote walking throughout the year. Walking Works is an online program from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. It allows you to set a walking goal for the company and then track the progress online. Employees enroll in the program and enter their miles, steps, or minutes walked each day. Employees who are physically unable to walk may enter the number of minutes they swim, bike, or complete other physical activities.

Walking is one of the easiest forms of exercise. Walking is cheap, doesn't require special equipment, can be done anywhere, is low-impact, and can be done alone or in a group. When done consistently, brisk walking has been shown to:

- decrease the risk of heart attack and type 2 diabetes;
- help control weight;
- lower blood pressure;
- reduce stress.

For more information on Walking Works, or to set up the online program for your office, contact your Independence Blue Cross health promotion coordinator.

### Welcome to our newest Wellness Partners

Abramson Center for Jewish Life	Inglis House	Resources for Human Development Inc.
Asplundh	Kingsbury, Inc.	Sandmeyer Steel
Balfour Beatty Communities	Maxwell Systems	Sharp Corporation
Chandler Hall	Micro-Coax	St. Joseph's Villa
F. A. Davis Company	Morgan, Lewis, & Bockius LLP	Superior Tube
Goddard Systems, Inc.	National A-1 Advertising Inc.	Urban Engineers
Greater Philadelphia Health Action	Oliver-Tolas Healthcare Packaging	Ursinus College
Impax Laboratories	Premier Dental Products Co.	Warminster Township

## The cost of presenteeism for US employers

The cost of poor employee health is much higher than many employers realize, according to a study recently published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. The study, one of the largest to date on the topic, included 10 employers and more than 150,000 workers.

The study determined that presenteeism, defined as when employees are at their jobs but unable to perform their job to the full extent of their duties, is a greater drain to company productivity than when employees are absent from work.

Other highlights from the study include:

- For every dollar spent on medical costs and prescriptions, there is \$2.30 in health-related productivity losses due to absenteeism and presenteeism.
- The top five conditions driving employer health care costs are cancer, back and neck pain, coronary heart disease, chronic pain, and high cholesterol.
- The same level of health-related productivity losses are seen in executives and managers as in blue collar workers.

For more information about the study, visit [www.workforce.com/archive/feature/26/39/50/index.php](http://www.workforce.com/archive/feature/26/39/50/index.php).

## Avoiding the stings and bites of the bugs of summer

The summer months bring not only sunny, warmer weather, but also buzzing, stinging insects. In warm weather, it is more likely you will be spending more time outdoors. It's important to be informed of some of the insects common to the area so that you can be on the lookout for bites and infections.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), ticks are usually harmless; however, they can lead to Lyme disease. The bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* can be transmitted to people by the black-legged deer tick. This tick is about the size of a pinhead and usually lives on deer and field mice. If you notice a rash (bull's eye) and flu-like symptoms, immediately contact your physician. Catching Lyme disease early is important. If it progresses, you can experience heart or neurological problems, and joint pain. Antibiotics, either intravenous or oral, are used to treat Lyme disease.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) caused by the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii* is another disease that one can get from an infected tick bite. Initial symptoms may include fever, nausea, vomiting, and muscle pain. Later signs and symptoms of RMSF include rash, abdominal pain, joint pain, and diarrhea. Antibiotics are used to treat RMSF. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, RMSF is best treated by using a tetracycline antibiotic, usually doxycycline.

Infected mosquitoes can transmit West Nile virus, another insect-borne illness. For the normal healthy person they usually will have very mild symptoms; however, for the older person, especially one with a compromised immune system, the illness can be very serious.

Most stings and bites from insects and spiders are minor and usually can be treated at home. Although the sting or bite may be irritating, it is important to recognize the signs of a severe allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis. This is a life-threatening allergic reaction that can occur within seconds to minutes. This is a medical emergency that warrants calling 9-1-1 immediately. Signs of an allergic reaction include swelling of the face or mouth, difficulty swallowing or speaking, chest tightness, wheezing or difficulty breathing, dizziness or fainting, abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting, hives, or sudden anxiety. The FDA states, "If you or your child has ever had an allergic reaction to a sting or bite, you should be evaluated by an allergist. In some cases, you may be advised to wear a medical identification tag that states the allergy, and to carry epinephrine, a medication used to treat serious or life-threatening allergic reactions."

The FDA recommends the following to avoid stings and bites:

- Use barriers such as window screens and netting.
- Keep your windows rolled up when driving.
- Avoid wooded, brushy, and grassy areas when possible.
- Avoid wearing heavily scented soaps and perfumes.
- Use caution eating and drinking outside; don't leave drinks and garbage cans uncovered.
- Avoid wearing bright colors and bright patterns.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants when possible; tuck your pant legs into socks or shoes.
- Wear a hat for extra protection.
- Get rid of containers with standing water that give mosquitoes a breeding ground.
- Use insect repellent.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/Features/StopTicks/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/StopTicks/) or [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/).

### **Editorial director**

*Lorrie Reynolds*  
Director, Population  
Health & Wellness

### **Managing editors**

*Sarah Anne Matthews*  
Communications Specialist

*Marian Hay*  
Manager, Population  
Health & Wellness

### **Health promotion coordinators**

*Diana Gulick*  
*Kristin Forlenza*  
*Geneva Jackson*  
*Debbie Heller*  
*Kristian Decembrino*