

Health promotion programs in workplaces: A global summary of what works

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY - SEPTEMBER 2024



KEY MESSAGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Workplaces are an important setting to deliver health promotion programs that reduce chronic disease risk factors.
- Most programs used strategies that targeted individual health behaviours.
- Programs that used multiple strategies to support behaviour change were the most effective.
- More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of digital and web-based programs, programs addressing alcohol use and programs that address workplace policy & practices.

What is this review about?

This umbrella review explored which workplace health promotion programs were effective in reducing different risk factors for chronic disease.

Why is this important?

Chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease are responsible for a high proportion of deaths globally each year.

We know that we can reduce people's chance of developing these diseases by delivering programs that effectively address contributing risk factors.

Workplaces represent a key setting in which working age adults spend a large amount of their time, making this an ideal environment to deliver health promotion programs.

We need to understand more about what works to effectively promote health in workplaces and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

WHAT IS AN UMBRELLA REVIEW?

An umbrella review is a review of systematic reviews.

A systematic review is a summary of individual research studies, or primary studies.



What did we do?

We searched for systematic reviews that examined how effective different workplace programs were for improving five chronic disease risk factors:



Increasing healthy eating



Increasing physical activity



Helping people to quit smoking



Reducing alcohol use



Reducing obesity

We identified the most rigorous and current systematic review for each type of program and each risk factor.

We classified different types of programs in terms of how effective they were on changing each risk factor.

What is included in this umbrella review?

21 systematic reviews
published since 2010



Most of the reviews included programs that addressed:



Healthy Eating



Physical Activity



Obesity



Most programs focused on changing health behaviours at the **individual level**.

Examples of individual level health behaviour programs:

- Educating employees about healthy eating.
- Employees wearing a pedometer to encourage increased physical activity.

We identified a wide range of program types, including:



Educational



Counselling



Web-based

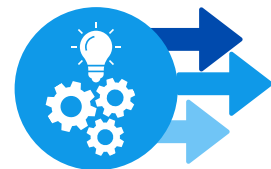


Environmental restructuring

... and others.

What did we find?

The programs that showed the greatest effectiveness across all risk factors were multi-component programs, which used multiple strategies to support behaviour change.



Digital and web-based health programs were classed as 'promising' strategies to improve healthy eating, physical activity and obesity risk factors. As more studies are conducted that test these types of programs, we expect to find more certainty about their effectiveness.

More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of programs addressing harmful alcohol use.

There are also relatively few studies that look at programs delivered on a broader, whole-of-workplace level (such as implementing policies about smoking, or working with workplace cafeterias to sell healthier food). These are areas in which more research is needed.

How can this research be used?

This umbrella review provides a useful overview of a range of programs that can be implemented in workplaces, as well as an assessment of their effectiveness.

This review may be particularly useful for policymakers and those working in workplace health promotion to guide planning and implementation of programs to reduce chronic disease risk factors.

About Us

This research was conducted by researchers at the University of Newcastle, Deakin University, Hunter New England Population Health and the National Centre of Implementation Science (NCOIS). NCOIS is an NHMRC funded Centre for Research Excellence associated with the University of Newcastle.

Key contact & research lead: Dr Heidi Turon - Heidi.Turon@newcastle.edu.au

Full Text Available

Turon H, Bezzina A, Lamont H, Barnes C, Lum M, Hodder RK, Leung GW, Peeters A, Wolfenden L, Yoong S. [Interventions in the workplace to reduce risk factors for noncommunicable diseases: an umbrella review of systematic reviews of effectiveness](#), Journal of Occupational Health, Volume 66, Issue 1, January-December 2024, uiae044.

Access online:

<https://academic.oup.com/joh/article/66/1/uiae044/7726543>