



Having a Vision for Workplace Eye Wellness

by Dr. Gene Sherman
Senior Vice President of Business Development
and Professional Relations
AlwaysCare Benefits Inc.
Baton Rouge, LA
GeneS@AlwaysCareBenefits.com

In recent years, wellness has become a hot topic. Successful initiatives have encouraged employees to go to the doctor for a wellness visit, get a flu shot, have their teeth cleaned, get a comprehensive eye exam, lose weight, stop smoking, reduce their stress, eat healthier and exercise regularly, just to name a few.

Your clients understand the importance of investing in the health and wellbeing of their employees. This is often exhibited through the benefits they offer in the workplace. They know employees with access to care and programs that encourage healthy lifestyles are more likely to take preventive measures, which can lower risks and assist in maintaining or increasing productivity.

According to Prevent Blindness America, more than 700,000 Americans injure their eyes at work each year yet, with the appropriate eye protection, 90% of eye injuries can be prevented. You often find yourself informing clients about the importance of having an eye exam because it can lead to the early detection of eye disease. Education is also fundamental to wellness and prevention, and both are easier and less expensive than curing or treating injury, illness or disease.

March is Workplace Eye Wellness Month, the perfect time to reinforce work-related vision wellness and prevention measures such as the importance of wearing protective eye wear, taking steps to avoid computer vision syndrome, getting an annual comprehensive exam and having vision insurance. Here are a few suggestions to get you and your clients started:

Protective Eyewear

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires the use of appropriate eye and face protection when exposed to potential hazards. Some workplaces use face shields, goggles, safety glasses or another type of special protection. And after an analysis of injury reports, these companies may be able to identify specific trends in the hazards that lead to eye injuries in their workplaces. A few questions to aid this analysis may include: Was the employee wearing protective eyewear at the time of the injury? Was the eyewear in need of repair prior to the injury? Was the eyewear clean, without dust or residue? Did the eyewear fit properly? Wearing appropriate protective eyewear is important but, in order for it to be effective, the eyewear should be appropriate for the task, be damage-free and clean, and fit correctly.



Computer Vision Syndrome

Computer Vision Syndrome is a term used to describe a range of eye and vision-related issues experienced by computer users. Almost 70% of adults in the United States experience some form of digital eye strain while using their electronic devices.¹ Many employers have found this to be a frequent job-related issue for their employees. Common symptoms include blurred vision, dry eyes, eyestrain, headaches and neck pain, which can result in decreased productivity, fatigue, an increase in errors and poor posture—significantly impacting workplace wellness.



To address these issues, you can suggest tips that can easily be incorporated into wellness and/or workplace safety communication such as blinking often, minimizing glare, adjusting monitor distance or display settings and taking vision breaks following the 20/20/20 rule (every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds). Eye drops and contacts or glasses made specifically for computer work may also help employees. Some employers may choose to provide ergonomic solutions, providing employees with safe and comfortable computer workstations. OSHA Computer Workstations eTool contains evaluation and purchasing guide checklists to assist with developing customized workstations that minimize or eliminate many vision issues.

March is Workplace Eye Wellness Month, the perfect time to reinforce work-related vision wellness and prevention measures.

Comprehensive Eye Exam

Thanks to your successful communication, your clients and their employees are aware of the importance and value delivered by an annual comprehensive eye exam. By identifying health conditions like cataracts, macular degeneration, hypertension and diabetes in their early stages, those impacted can indirectly save money on potentially more serious medical expenses later. Even if they do not wear glasses or contacts and have not experienced any vision issues, an eye exam and preventive measures can help them maintain their quality of vision and overall health. Vision neglect can lead to blindness as well as delayed detection and diagnosis of major conditions and diseases.

Vision Insurance

With vision insurance, employees have access to a network of credentialed eye doctors and retail optical materials outlets that provide important health and wellness benefits. Network providers' services tend to be less expensive than those of out-of-network providers and some networks' eye care providers will offer discounts on additional purchases or services not covered by insurance. Vision insurance is a popular voluntary benefit that tends to see high participation at enrollments. Understanding that poor vision directly correlates to decreased productivity, clients who provide group vision insurance coverage are not only investing in the well-being of their employees, but are taking preventive measures to help maintain and/or increase productivity as well.

Preventive measures directly link to healthcare costs. With increased participation in wellness initiatives, the workforce can potentially see a drop in overall illness rates and the number of conditions or diseases that require expensive treatment. Quite simply, healthier people tend to be more productive. Like overall health and wellness, eye health and safety should be a priority in every workplace. Education is key in changing vision health and safety behaviors and while utilization may not increase overnight, message reinforcement has proven to be beneficial. By incorporating this message into their internal communications, employers are reinforcing the importance of eye safety. As an added step, employers may want to incorporate eye safety into their ongoing training programs to serve as a refresher.

Sight is often recognized as the most important sense, yet vision care is often neglected unless it is being addressed in a reactive manner. As a trusted advisor and valued partner to your clients, you have the opportunity to reiterate that prevention is key to improving and maintaining one's health and wellbeing. **HIU**

1 Screens, Phones, Tablets and More: Keeping Your Eyes Safe in a Digital Age. The Vision Council. Accessed at <https://www.thevisioncouncil.org/consumers/media/VCDigitalEyeStrainReport2012FINAL.pdf>. January 15, 2013

THE ART OF MAKING FRIENDS

Our *because-you're-our-customer-and-we-care-about-your-experience* approach to compliance services.



IT'S ALL INCLUDED 1. Online, anytime, unlimited access to plan discrimination testing; 2. Government-mandated plan document amendments; 3. Access to our in-house compliance team for accurate and timely responses to questions about your plan.

EXPECT MORE

www.flex125.com



AmeriFlex Convenience Card®

Consolidated FSA/HRA/HSA/CRA Debit Card Platform

AmeriFlex Convenience Portal

Web-based System for Administration of CDHC Plans

Workforce

Payroll, Time and Attendance, Human Resources, and Benefits Administration

COBRA & Special Plan Billing Services

Enterprise Class, Web-Based Solution for COBRA Administration

Compliance Services

Resources and Guidance to Help Keep You Up-To-Date and in Compliance with Evolving Regulations

ePOP

Order POP documents instantly through our online portal

PROPOSAL REQUESTS: info@flex125.com

CALL TOLL-FREE: 888.868.FLEX (3539)

