



## **Weight Loss Competitions**

Individuals who eat healthy and exercise regularly are more likely to be happy, hardworking and enthusiastic about their job. Eating nutritiously and staying active creates a community of heart healthy individuals while also keeping health care costs low for Penn State. This intervention of weight loss competitions can make a healthy lifestyle more enjoyable by adding in a social element. Budget ranges depending on size of department and purchases. Budget can range from free implementation to \$100+.

### **How to Implement**

- Decide on duration of the program
  - MayoClinic.com recommends that a safe rate of weight loss is about 1 to 2 pounds per week. In a two-month challenge, participants can lose 8 to 16 pounds safely or 24 to 48 pounds in a six-month challenge.
- Reserve a room during the lunch hour to discuss with employees the importance and the benefits of eating healthy and exercising regularly and introduce the competition
- PROMOTE the challenge.
- Have weigh-ins. This should be done individually with privacy.
  - Have participants set realistic and healthy weight loss or weight maintenance goals.
- Tips/ Ideas
  - Provide individuals with PRO Wellness's Work Well Challenge Chart and Daily Log (located in Weight Management Promotional Materials)
  - Give individuals food journals (\$10 each) and encourage your employees to write down what they are eating, drinking, and when they are exercising. This keeps them accountable for their choices. Or have your students/employees download a free app to track their wellness habits, options are provided below.
  - Have teams choose their favorite charities
    - Whoever wins gets a portion or all of the prize money forwarded to the chosen beneficiary.
  - To promote healthy living, utilize online handouts and tools to demonstrate an appropriate portion size and balanced plate. ChooseMyPlate.gov is a perfect place for individuals to explore and build a "plate" according to their needs.
    - Promote exercise! Send participants reminders to get moving and eat well.
    - Use signage in cafeterias to encourage healthier choices. Examples including putting a heart next to heart healthy options and displaying a calorie and sugar comparison chart (i.e. soda versus water). Graphics and signage are free at ChooseMyPlate.gov.



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- Set weekly weigh-ins.
- Provide a larger incentive (standing desk, personal training sessions, etc.) to the top individuals who lost the largest percentage of body weight during the competition.
- Ideas and tips for competitions:
  - <https://psmag.com/social-justice/the-weight-loss-incentive-that-works-better-than-cash-54885>
  - <https://www.livestrong.com/article/78942-calculate-percentage-body-fat-loss/>
  - <http://blog.elivatefitness.com/features/business-tips/weight-loss-challenge/>
  - [https://www.sparkpeople.com/blog/blog.asp?post=9\\_ways\\_to\\_organize\\_a\\_gethealthy\\_group\\_challenge](https://www.sparkpeople.com/blog/blog.asp?post=9_ways_to_organize_a_gethealthy_group_challenge)

**\*Reach out to Penn State PRO Wellness for help with logistics.\***

### **Additional Resources:**

- Free apps include My Fitness Pal, Fooducate, Shop Well and Lifesum
- NutritionFacts.org provides you with nutritional information
- FoodInsight.org provides newsletters and articles for employees to stay up-to date on the latest information regarding wellness.
- Looking for healthy recipes, try MyNewRoots.com!

### **Evaluation**

*To assess the impact of the intervention:*

- Poll the department, is at least 40% of the department participating in the weight loss competitions?
- Is the free signage from ChooseMyPlate.gov hung in a visible area? Are the signs hung where people purchase/choose their meals?
- Poll the department, are they utilizing the free weight loss apps, wellness journals and/or websites?
- Send out a short anonymous survey asking if any employee has any successes they would like to share with the group, including weight loss, better eating habits and feeling more energized.

*To encourage employees/students to participate, you may try:*

- Offering an incentive to participate- such as a subsidy or a raffle ticket for a gift card



**Example Pre and Post Questions:**

- Would you say that in general your health is:
  - Excellent
  - Very good
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
  - Don't know
  
- Thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good?
  
- During the past month, other than your regular job, did you participate in any physical activities or exercises such as running, calisthenics, golf, gardening, or walking for exercise?
  
- And when you took part in this activity, for how many minutes did you usually keep at it?
  
- What is your biggest barrier to being physically active or exercise?
  - Affordability of gym membership
  - Lack of time
  - Lack of knowledge about how to exercise
  - I don't like exercising
  - Lack of fun programs – intramural sports, etc.
  - Other (please specify)
  
- All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job?
  - Very satisfied
  - Somewhat satisfied
  - Not too satisfied
  - Not at all satisfied
  
- How satisfied are you with current wellness programs?
  - Very satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Neutral
  - Dissatisfied
  - Very dissatisfied