MetLife | Return to Health

Diabetes

According to the CDC, **38.4 million people live with diabetes**. That's 11.6% of the US population.[1]

Effectively managing diabetes in the workplace will not only help keep employees healthy and productive but can lower healthcare costs for both the employee and the business.



Signs of hypoglycemia[4]

- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Anxiety
- Palpitations
- Tremors
- Drowsiness
- Altered mental status
- Slurred speech

Treatment can include:

- Sugar (candy, juice, glucose tablets)
- Crackers with peanut butter
- Calling 911

Things to consider when supporting an employee with diabetes:[2]

Small adjustments in the environment or schedule can reduce absenteeism, reduce the risk of an on-the-job injury, and help ensure compliance with applicable law. Even further, these changes can increase productivity, concentration, and energy levels of employees.

Employers can help support employees with diabetes in multiple ways as may be appropriate and workable from a business perspective.

These can include:

- A private area to test blood sugar or administer insulin
- A place to rest until blood sugar stabilizes
- Breaks to eat/drink, take medication, or test blood sugar
- Modified work schedule or shift change
- Utilizing sit-stand workstation for individuals with diabetic neuropathy
- Flexible schedule to allow for ongoing treatment, recuperation, or training on diabetes
- Job modifications to reduce physical exertion or demands

Tips for shift work employees:[3]

- Work with healthcare team for proper insulin-carbohydrate ratio throughout the day
- Work with Registered Dietician to help manage meals
    - Example: larger meal at 6pm with smaller meals throughout the night
- Utilize 10-15 minute breaks to replenish glucose

Employers can create a successful diabetes management program by:[2,3]

- Ensuring the program overlaps with lifestyle management program
- Rallying support from senior management and leadership
- Utilizing culturally sensitive approaches to acknowledge diverse beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors
- Aligning the program with already existing diabetes health benefits offered to employees
- Promoting a culture of wellness and an environment that encourages healthy choices

The information contained herein is purely for informational purposes, and is not intended to present medical, occupational, or therapeutic advice.

1. https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/php/data-research/index.html stats
2. https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/professional-info/employers.html
3. Diabetes in the Workplace and the ADA | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (eeoc.gov)
4. https://app.mdguidelines.com/health-advisor/