



**Changing the course and
costs of diabetes at work:**
Best practices for employers



Overview

In 2018, 34.2 million Americans – 10.5% of the population – had Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, and 88 million Americans age 18 and older had pre-diabetes.¹ Since then, the numbers have continued to rise. Diabetes-related costs have also increased, and today diabetes is one of the most expensive diseases affecting U.S. employers.²

The human and financial burden of diabetes is well-documented, but employers have a critical role to play in changing the course and costs of diabetes at work. **Essential to success is recognizing that diabetes is a life-changing disease that requires a personal action plan to manage and control.** Optimal employer support and benefits for employees with diabetes enables and engages them to follow the unique diabetes management plan that works for them – everyday.

At the heart of the best practices that drive optimized diabetes management in the workplace is an understanding that:

- **One size doesn't fit all when considering company-sponsored diabetes-related services.** Advances in technology and digital on-demand personalized coaching make a difference to employees with the condition and, in turn, to your bottom line.
- **Employees must feel their health and wellness is a priority to their employers.** With diabetes rates rising, this condition is a costly reality for all and requires specific attention and benefits.
- **Everyone wants to feel empowered at work.** Employees with diabetes are no different, though empowerment for these individuals includes making it easier for them to be engaged in their daily diabetes management needs during the workday and at home.

Diabetes... is personal and takes a toll

Diabetes impacts each individual differently. It is a life-changing disease that requires **vigilance, adherence, engagement and consistency** – but how that translates into disease management for each person can differ. That's why a truly individualized approach is essential for successfully navigating the complexities and challenges of diabetes – including when at work.

People with diabetes are typically left alone with difficult daily therapy decisions. As a result, 43% are uncontrolled.³ This has a substantial financial toll: the average annual cost of uncontrolled diabetes is \$21,193 vs. \$13,418 for controlled diabetes.³

The human toll is considerable too. Many people living with diabetes often do not reveal their condition to colleagues or superiors in their workplace. In fact, Secrets & Solutions, a RocheDiabetes Care-commissioned survey of over 200 benefits decision-makers at self-funded companies found that four in five (81%) of benefits decision-makers believe employees with diabetes keep their condition a secret.⁴

However, survey findings also illuminated an opportunity: 91% of respondents believe employees would be less likely to keep their diabetes a secret if they could receive a company-sponsored program that simplified diabetes management with personalized support that could be tailored to their individual needs.⁴

Diabetes... is expensive for employers

Research shows that diabetes is one of the most expensive chronic diseases, with associated costs of \$327 billion in the U.S. annually. It is also associated with significant indirect costs that impact and are absorbed by employers.⁵

Poorly managed diabetes can impact employee productivity, and reduced productivity due to inadequately managed diabetes comes at a substantial cost.

Full-time employees living with diabetes miss an average of 5.5 more days each year compared to others, and also can struggle with productivity as a result of common diabetes-related side effects such as fatigue. All of this comes at a price: the American Diabetes Association estimates that diabetes costs employers \$20.4 billion per year in lost productivity due to absenteeism.²



Financial burden of diabetes at work



- Nearly **one in three** benefits decision-makers surveyed (29%) have experienced increased costs to replace workers due to diabetes-related absence



- **One third (32%)** cite indirect costs of diabetes resulting from fatigue, understaffing and reduced productivity



- **One in four (23%)** say a fallout of diabetes at work is poor morale among employees who must perform work to cover absent co-workers⁴

Diabetes... must be managed at work and at home

People living with diabetes must deal with the unpredictability of life and of this disease, and often face confusion, frustration and worry on top of symptoms that can challenge their drive to continue. These challenges can be further exacerbated during working hours.

Proper disease management requires constant attention that can't be paused during the workday. Indeed, two in three (67%) benefits decision-makers surveyed believe employees with diabetes find everyday management of their condition to feel like a second job! Employers have a role in supporting the specific health and wellness needs of their employees with diabetes. According to the Secrets & Solutions survey, finding a company-sponsored solution for employees with diabetes is among the top three priorities for a majority (59%) of benefits decision-makers. Most say this issue keeps them up at night.⁴

Of all the health-related issues facing their workforces, **benefits decision-makers surveyed say that diabetes management has the most significant impact on the productivity of their company**, compared with obesity, smoking, sedentary lifestyle and mental health.⁴

The advantages of improving diabetes management at work are myriad. Employees will be more empowered, morale will be boosted, productivity and quality-of-life will be elevated and diabetes-related absenteeism and expenses can be reduced.

Fortunately, there are solutions to help make this achievable.



Did you know?

Adults employed full-time typically spend an estimated



50% of their total waking hours at work during any given workday.

This translates into a significant portion of time that adults living with diabetes need to deal with disease management in the workplace.

Best practices to changing the course and costs of diabetes at work:

1. Cultivate a culture that champions and supports an individualized and authentic approach to wellness and engaged diabetes care
2. Prioritize a personalized approach – because one size doesn't fit all with diabetes
3. Motivate employee participation and engagement in an employer-sponsored diabetes management program

Employers can help their employees with diabetes more successfully navigate and manage their disease – resulting in added value for the employer and employees, improved productivity, reduced absenteeism and decreased turnover due to diabetes-related complications.

Employers have a unique opportunity to be part of the solution by leading actionable efforts that make a meaningful impact and bring measurable value to both employees and the company. **The three best practices outlined in this document explain how this can be achieved – and why it's imperative.**

Best Practice #1: Cultivate a culture that champions and supports an individualized and authentic approach to health and diabetes care

Companies more commonly make efforts to show support for diabetes around moments-in-time throughout a given year. While such initiatives are important, they are often more generic and don't typically translate into real-world solutions that help employees with diabetes manage their disease properly.

Corporate dedication to diabetes and the health, care and wellness of employees living with this condition must extend beyond moments-in-time, and exist as a core, evergreen value with tangible outputs. The opportunity to make a measurable difference in the lives of employees living with diabetes lies with a deep-rooted employer commitment to the health of its workforce on an individual level.

Reduce costs and improve satisfaction by investing in disease management:

Better control translates to lower costs

↓ 1.48% Estimated HbA1c reduction

mySugr program participants see significant reductions in estimated HbA1c levels in just 16 weeks.⁷

↓ \$7,775 Average savings per person, per year

Lower HbA1c levels and better control translate to lower healthcare costs associated with diabetes for payers.³

This can be accomplished for employees living with diabetes in a variety of ways:

- Create a workplace environment that offers the option of **dedicated and/or private spaces** where blood glucose monitoring, insulin delivery and other needs can be taken care of.
- Host **in-office diabetes-related education** for all employees to encourage awareness, understanding and support across colleagues.
- Offer **“health fairs”** that might include optional blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring – common risk factors associated with diabetes that also impact many others.
- Accommodate **workday flexibility** for those who need to schedule doctor’s appointments or make health-related phone calls during the workday.
- Offer **diabetes-friendly foods** and/or relevant nutritional information with any company-provided, in-office catering.
- Provide a **proven, progressive benefits package** that includes diabetes-specific, **personalized support** support spanning home and work-life that is adaptable to the unique needs of each employee.

While most benefits decision-makers surveyed in the Secrets & Solutions Survey believe employees with diabetes keep their condition a secret, 91% believe employees would be less likely to keep their diabetes a secret if they could receive a company-sponsored program that simplified diabetes management.⁴ Employees might then also be more likely to feel comfortable taking better proactive and consistent care of themselves, which can result in:

- Improved disease management and treatment adherence
- Confidence in self, health and their employer
- Increased productivity
- Fewer sick days
- Less stress



Best Practice #2: Prioritize a personalized approach with digital, 24/7 coaching support – because one size doesn't fit all with diabetes

While there are common threads across most cases of diabetes, this disease affects each person differently. As such, successful diabetes management in the workplace requires employer dedication to treating all employees living with diabetes as individuals – and the understanding **there is no “one size fits all” approach**.

One-on-one digital services such as app-based logging and 24/7 personalized coaching help drive compliance and goal achievement, as the scope and delivery of care is customized based on the needs of every individual.

The RocheDiabetes Health Connection program is designed **to personalize and simplify diabetes management at work and at home** for employees with the condition, **facilitating better near- and long-term outcomes for these individuals and the companies they work for** with seamless, comprehensive and highly-individualized constant support.

The ongoing monitoring involved in diabetes management can be complex and complicated – it's a lot to keep track of, especially when at work. Optimized solutions help employees more easily and regularly track their numbers and symptoms, with oversight and direct input from healthcare professionals from the convenience of their mobile phone.

With RocheDiabetes Health Connection's **mySugr Enterprise App**, user employees with diabetes or prediabetes are assigned a personal coach – and the app is specifically designed to facilitate personal relationships between users and their assigned coach. Coaches become familiarized with the unique needs of those they support, and pairs can interact through the app, or via phone or email, with flexibility depending on participant preference.

As a digital tool, mySugr offers a user-friendly interface that's easy to use, comprehensive and engaging. **mySugr was developed to simplify the logging processes required for diabetes-related tracking, and features options that can be tailored to each individual in order to increase adherence.**

The RocheDiabetes Health Connection program includes:



- Unlimited Accu-Chek® testing supplies delivered to employee homes without them ever having to place an order



- On-demand coaching via the mySugr app



- Engaging mySugr app that automatically tracks blood sugar test results



- Device integration with connected weight scale and blood pressure cuff

- More work to cover absent co-workers⁴

Differentiating benefits include:

- Quick and easy logging of blood sugar, meals, carbs and more
- Automatic syncing blood glucose values via Bluetooth® connection
- Motivating feedback to keep patients going
- Interactive challenges to educate and inform users
- Personalized logging screen that is customizable based on patients' preference
- Compatibility with Apple and Android devices
- HbA1c calculator and estimation
- Links daily monitoring activities to long-term clinical outcome providing directional feedback to the patients
- Chat feature for users to connect with their personal coach
- Blended on-demand and preventative coaching
- Home-delivery of unlimited Accu-Chek® testing supplies

Seamless app integration with Accu-Chek® products, blood pressure monitor, digital weight scale and more – coupled with the convenience of consumption-based home supply delivery, further simplifies the logistics of diabetes tracking and management for patients.

mySugr also features downloadable reports, and logged data is automatically shared with a user's coach and physician. These healthcare professionals can monitor a patient's data through the lens of identifying patterns – and if they see a negative trend or symptom reporting, they can flag it for the patient and help address it before it becomes a crisis.

A truly personalized approach to diabetes care offers demonstrable value for both the employee and employer.

If an employee's A1C is better controlled, for example, the benefits are multifold: they will feel better, potentially require less intervention or emergency care, their work performance won't be negatively impacted due to symptom impediment, and the employer will incur fewer costs.

Diabetes doesn't quit. If uncontrolled, the health of people living with diabetes suffers – with potentially dire implications for them as well as their employers. Inaction isn't an option, given the associated risks for all.

Making everyday diabetes management easier – with a company-supported program that provides unlimited supplies, digital and emotional support – can help employees improve blood sugar control. They'll be and feel healthier, which in turn has positive results in the workplace.

Real results:

↓ 1.48% Estimated HbA1c reduction

mySugr program participants see significant reductions in estimated HbA1c levels in just 16 weeks.⁷



To-date:

1.8 million registered users

worldwide use mySugr to help monitor their diabetes

- mySugr use is associated with a significant impact on blood glucose **control in just 16 weeks**

Best Practice #3: Motivate Employee Participation and Engagement

The degree to which patient needs are unsupported or thwarted by external factors in their everyday life can have a detrimental impact on disease management. It is estimated that up to 50% of patients do not take their medications as prescribed.⁶ Research has also shown that ambivalence, rather than “noncompliance,” causes inaction. All of this can be particularly dangerous for individuals living with diabetes.

Further, regardless of available support or services, if an employee with diabetes is not inspired to engage they will not progress. In the workplace, there are many hurdles that can impede this – from available time, to office space configuration, to expense. But employers can take steps to overcome these barriers, and encourage employees to be more engaged in their health management – to the benefit of both employees and employers.

In order for diabetes management to be successful, **patients must be motivated, comfortable and confident** in how they can participate in their own care. Employers can help to minimize and mitigate the common challenges seen in the workplace – where working adults spend so much of their time, by:

- Ensuring that diabetes support and benefits include **individualized, customizable options** that are not generic, but cater to the personal needs and preferences of employees.
- Facilitating a **two-way, ongoing dialogue** with employees with diabetes as a means of soliciting important input. This also lets employees know their voices matter – and will be heard.
- Encouraging **health-related activities throughout the workday**, such as taking time to stretch, go for a walk, drink water or other simple steps that can benefit everyone – especially those with or at risk for diabetes. If employees track their participation or progress, consistency could be rewarded with a small token or other recognition.

Employers should actively promote any diabetes-support programs that are launched with internal marketing and onboarding activities to help boost employee enrollment and usage. **Sharing and celebrating resonant success stories and testimonials** internally can also be an effective means of boosting morale, promoting adherence and rallying others to get involved.

SECRETS & SOLUTIONS

SURVEY REVEALED:



94% of benefits decision-makers agree a solution to ease the human and financial burden of diabetes in the workplace is to offer company-sponsored help for employees with the condition that simplifies everyday management.⁴

**For more information about RocheDiabetes Health Connection,
please visit <https://www.rochediabeteshealthconnection.com/>.**

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