

Healthy Bites: A Challenge-based Worksite Wellness Nutrition Program

HERNDON ME¹, ESPAT AJ², and NATHAN-GARNER LR².

¹HR WorkLife & Wellness; MD Anderson Cancer Center; Houston, Texas ²Public Education Office; MD Anderson Cancer Center; Houston, Texas

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The worksite health promotion literature has shown that successful nutrition communication programs call for making small changes to diet, one at a time. The use of observational learning (role models) and a “challenge” scenario for behavior change is supported by Social Cognitive Theory. The significance of these small changes in worksites is underscored by a recent Harvard Business Review article suggesting workplace wellness programs can return up \$2.71 on every \$1.00 invested. The purpose of the proposed program, Healthy Bites, is to increase knowledge of employees regarding the impact of specific nutrition behaviors related to reducing cancer risk and improving weight status. The relationships between types of activities attended and/or tools used with degree of behavior change will also be evaluated. **Methods:** Eligible participants are MD Anderson Cancer Center employees. Participants will be asked to complete monthly nutrition challenges during 2013 to possibly reduce cancer risk and improve weight status. Challenge topics include: eating breakfast, not skipping meals, consuming whole grains, following the MyPlate diagram, eating less red meat and processed meat, eating more plant-based protein, drinking more water, eating out less, increasing fruit and vegetables, limiting sodium, and drinking less alcohol. Each month participants will receive printed tools, tips and recipes via email. Participants will also be able to attend cooking demonstrations and informational lectures, as well as read stories about fellow employees who have successfully completed the challenges. **Results:** (Evaluation): Surveys will be distributed to participants at program initiation (January 2013), the mid-point (July 2013) and at conclusion (December 2013). The surveys will evaluate/assess: nutrition knowledge, nutrition habits, enhancements to improve the challenges, likeability of program, number of challenges completed, whether families participating together were more successful, and usefulness of Healthy Bites tools and content. **Conclusions:** Healthy Bites will evaluate how a nutrition behavior change program can be

successfully implemented in a large hospital-based workplace setting to improve nutrition knowledge and habits among employees.

KEY WORDS: Nutrition, Cancer Prevention, Weight Management, Behavior Change