

# Wellness App Helps Employees Eat Healthier at Work and at Home



Ensuring workers' health and safety should mean more than merely protecting them from, say, breaking a leg or developing an occupational illness. Employers should also consider taking steps to improve workers' overall wellness, such as by helping them lose weight, quit smoking, exercise more and eat healthier. Digital tools can make taking such steps easier.

For example, the *New York Times* recently wrote about an app and website that's designed to help employees navigate a company's cafeteria menu to find choices that best meet a set of preferences and health goals set by the workers themselves. Zipongo also covers takeout meals and eating at home, offering tools such as recipes and shopping lists.

Since Zipongo debuted in 2011, some 125 companies including Google and IBM have let their employees try it, although none have made it mandatory.

Dr. Jason Langheier, the founder of Zipongo, says the company charges employers on average a little more than \$50 a year per employee for a complete set of its services, .

Employees of companies that pay for the system can load it with various biometrics and tie their grocery loyalty cards to it. For example, users may input their food preferences ' spicy, gluten-free, protein-rich ' and, if they want, biometric data such as cholesterol and blood pressure levels. Zipongo then creates a menu from the choices in the employer's cafeteria.

About half of Google employees who signed up for Zipongo used the app at least once a month in 2014, according to a Harvard Business School case study. Google employees using Zipongo ate more fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, calcium, fish and fiber-rich foods. Google also saw a dip in red meat consumption among its Zipongo users, which was one of its goals.

OHS Insider has additional resources to help you implement a wellness program in your workplace or convince senior management to do so, including:

- How to use a food and beverage policy to improve workers' health
- Information on how to use a guide to implement a successful workplace

health promotion program

- A study that suggests wellness programs may lead to improved worker health, increased productivity and reduced costs for employers
- The benefits of wellness programs for small companies
- Model Wellness Questionnaire
- Checklist for evaluating your readiness for an integrated OHS and wellness program.