
Worker wellbeing remains a major issue in Ireland

Almost 90 per cent of Irish workers have worked while sick, with three in ten working against the advice of their GP - new Mater Private report.

Irish workers spend less than the price of a cup of coffee per day on their personal health and wellbeing, according to a new report published by the Mater Private Healthcare Group.

'Healthy Working', a report that analyses how diet, exercise and work-life balance affect Irish workers' physical and mental health, shows that the Irish workforce are slow to spend on their personal health and wellbeing, and even slower to heed medical guidance, with almost three in ten continuing to work while sick against the advice of their GP.

In general, the majority (85 per cent) of Irish workers have a relatively healthy lifestyle. However, the report's findings suggest that workers are not as healthy as they believe. Exactly half of Irish workers say that their job impedes their ability to take exercise, with one in every four skipping breakfast every day.

In relation to personal health, just 45 per cent of workers visit the GP for a yearly check-up, with the others 55 per cent only going to their doctor when they have a specific health complaint.

The disconnection

The research also highlighted a distinct disconnect between employer's expectations and their workers when they attempt to strike a balance between work and a personal life.

One in five workers admitted to having a poor work-life balance, with a further 57 per cent saying they are constantly thinking about work, even on days off.

Despite being offered a minimum of 20 days annual leave per year, almost 20pc of employees do not take their full allocation. Of those who don't, over one third say they are afraid their workload will increase and another third (34pc) claim that there is no one to manage their workload while away.

However, most employers recognise the importance of staff wellbeing, with 75 per cent investing in health and wellness perks for their teams which include flexible work solutions, on-site exercise classes and massage treatments.

Irish employers perform better when it comes to lunch, with 81 per cent of employers providing eating facilities on-site, and 53 per cent offering an in-house catering option for workers.

Commenting on the report's findings, Mary Morrogh, consultant general surgeon, breast surgeon and medical director of the Mater Private Wellness Programme said; "We sometimes forget that we are responsible for managing our own health and that how healthy we are depends on the actions, both big and small, that we take every day.

"People tend to assume that their health only requires attention when they have a new or longstanding medical complaint. Even then, a significant proportion of the workforce will compromise their health by making poor choices, such as delaying presentation to their doctor, or not heeding the advice given by the GP. This must change.

"Employers have a significant role to play in helping their workers to maintain optimal health by introducing workplace benefits like healthy lunches, on-site employee health checks or perhaps even subsidised health insurance. By doing so, they are ensuring their workforce remains healthy, motivated, and performing well."

Mater Private Healthcare Group provides some of the world's most technologically advanced treatment options to patients across six locations in Ireland and one in the UK.

By Stephen Larkin

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