



Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health

Off we go! - Health at workplaces

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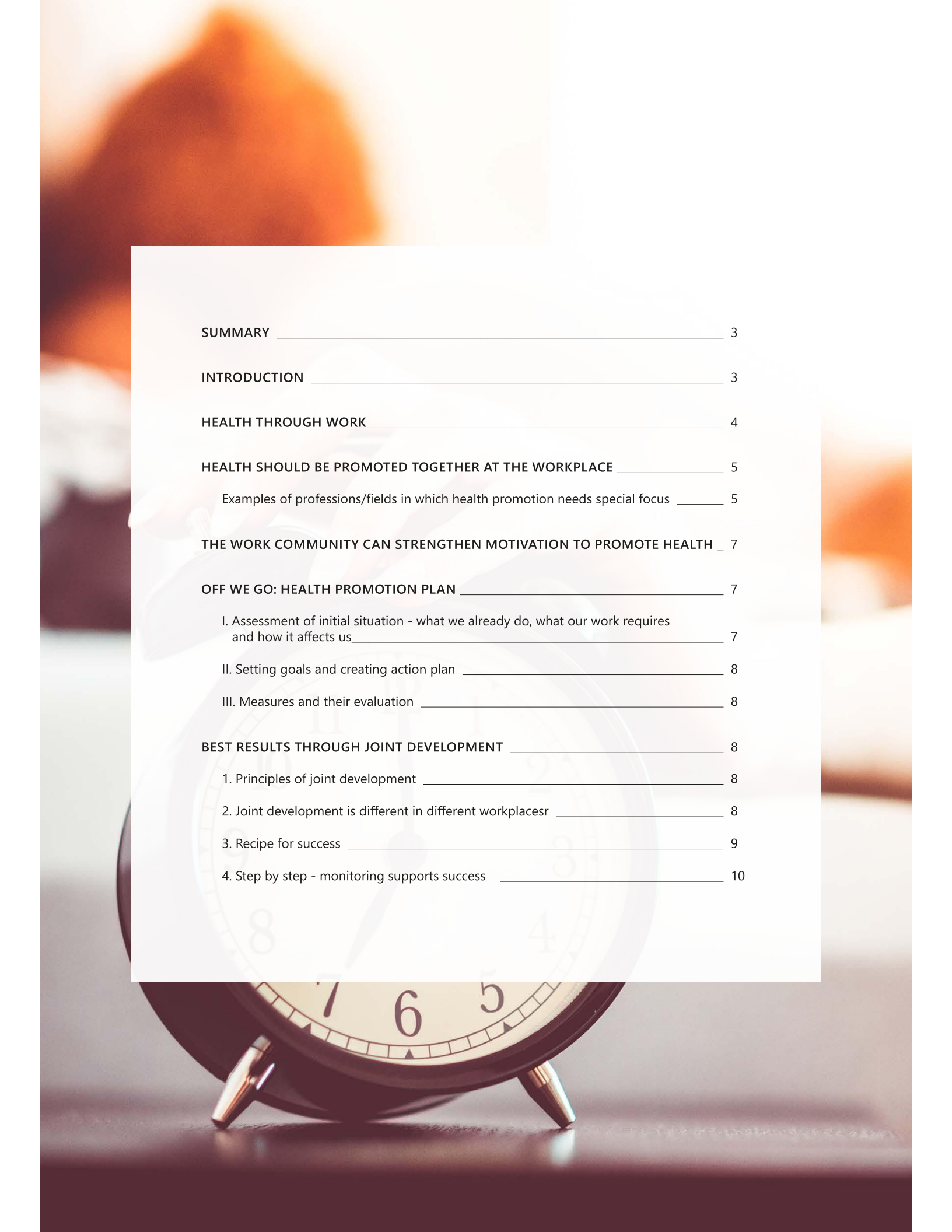
The workplace can
promote health in
many ways

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through joint
development



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Summary

Employee well-being can be promoted at the workplace. These guidelines present ways in which to promote healthy lifestyle habits – exercise, diet and sleep – at the workplace. These guidelines are based on scientific reviews and expert knowledge. In order to compile them, we examined the ways in which workplaces promote recovery from work, healthy nutrition, good quality and sufficient sleep, and exercise in both physically strenuous work and sedentary work. We also examined the ways in which small workplaces increase physical activity and promote a healthy diet.

The aim of promoting health at workplaces is to foster employees' work ability, their recovery from work, and their everyday work activity, in order to be successful in their professions. Health promotion methods are different in different workplaces, because the demands of the work and their effects on health vary.

Introduction

Off we go! - The Health at workplaces guidelines for promoting health at the workplace are produced by the Evidence-based Health Promotion consortium project, Promo@work. This project is funded by the Strategic Research Council, which operates in conjunction with the Academy of Finland. The guidelines have been drawn up in co-operation with a group of work life influencers. A list of the participating co-operative parties can be found on the back cover. We warmly thank all the experts who participated in the joint development for their efforts at all the different stages of drawing up these guidelines.



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Health from work

Have you ever thought that in addition to providing meaningful activity, learning, life content, and salary, work can also improve your health? Even small, frequently repeated health-promoting actions at the workplace are important, because a large part of our wakeful hours is spent at work. So, the choices you make at work matter. Health promotion methods are different at different workplaces, because the demands of the work and their effects on health vary.

Health-promoting measures help prevent and manage the health risks that arise from work-related factors. Health promotion is more effective when you methodically and simultaneously take advantage of the many opportunities at your workplace. A workplace's health-promoting measures may be related to the environment, the community and its culture, or to individuals and services.

DID YOU KNOW?

All workplace actors in Finland are legally obliged to act in a way that promotes health. At its minimum, this means attending to their statutory health and work ability duties.

Does your work require vigilance and alertness? Eat regularly, get a sufficient amount of good quality sleep, and take breaks during the working day.

Eating together and putting your phones away promotes community spirit and detachment from work pressures.

Is your work physically strenuous? Make sure that you recover properly and that your physical fitness is good enough to meet the demands of your work.

Healthy habits among nightworkers reduce health risks and promote work ability.

Walking meetings are invigorating and produce creative solutions. Standing helps you keep alert during meetings.





Health should be promoted together at the workplace

Healthy eating, exercising and sleeping habits can be fostered at the workplace. The work community can think of solutions together to support individuals, encourage healthy choices and to ensure peer support to promote recovery from work. What changes need to be made to ensure well-being for everybody?

Examples of professions/fields in which health promotion needs special focus

RESCUE WORKERS, FIRE-FIGHTERS AND PARAMEDICS

These workers are exposed to many physically, psychologically and socially loading factors in changing, demanding and unpredictable environments. A rescue workers' work requires diverse functional capacity, of they are to survive their tasks without endangering either their own or others' health.

PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS

The majority of professional drivers are overweight or obese, and also work nights. Meal options at roadside cafes are limited, especially at night, and healthy options are seldom available and may be difficult to recognize. Taking breaks from sitting is essential, and active commuting and leisure time exercise become even more important.

SERVICE INDUSTRY

Service industry work, for example restaurant work, has many simultaneous loading factors, for example, psychosocial strain in customer work, noise, physically strenuous factors, and shift work. In restaurant work, alcohol is also easily available.



The work community can strengthen motivation to promote health

The workplace can influence employees' lifestyle behaviours, but not haphazardly; systematic measures and effectively proven methods are required, so that good intentions do not become counterproductive. It is important that a person feels they make their own choices and decide on their own actions.

Control, or feeling that one's own decision-making rights are limited, does not motivate a person to make lifestyle changes. Feeling that you are able to influence both yourself and the issues related to your workplace encourages you to continue.

Off we go! Health promotion plan

A health promotion plan guides the workplace's goal-oriented health-promoting measures and their evaluation. It is important that creating and following a plan is connected to the practices already in place at the workplace or to other regularly occurring activity (annual planning cycle). People at the workplace are more committed when the plan is made together.

When planning health promotion at the workplace, it is important to agree on who is responsible for leading the

activity, when to start, a schedule, who is to participate in the activity, as well as to schedule enough time for doing things together.

Stages of the plan: I) Assessment of initial situation, II) Setting a goal and creating an action plan, and III) measures and their evaluation.

I. Assessment of initial situation - what we already do, what our work requires and how it affects us

Using the list of tips, assess how and in what issues your workplace supports healthy lifestyle habits and recovery from work.

WHAT IS ALREADY IN ORDER AND WHAT NEEDS IMPROVING? WHAT DO WE NEED TO WORK ON? WHAT DO WE NEED SUPPORT WITH?

Look at the list of tips:

<https://www.ttl.fi/en/off-we-go-health-at-workplaces>

Next, assess the demands of your work and its effects on you. By demands we mean the work ability criteria that a worker

must fulfil to be able to perform their work sufficiently safely, healthily and effectively. By effects we mean, for example, health risks in which some factors related to your work may play. It is important to listen to employees' perceptions and experiences. The Primer workshop model is a good tool for this stage. Risk assessments, occupational health services' knowledge of the workplace's situation, or the results of employee surveys can also be used in the assessment.



II. Setting goals and creating an action plan

When setting goals, it is worth spending some time thinking about a long-term goal as well as the smaller actions you can take to reach it. This makes goals more concrete and enables feelings of success. The goals should be described in a way that their achievement can be observed and measured (for example, what happens and over what period of time).

When creating the action plan, a brainstorming session may be useful for finding different practical solutions. For example, make a list of five ideas, and assess their pluses and minuses. After this, you can choose the best and easiest solution to carry out (one or more).

Next, plan the solution: what actually has to be done, why, who does it, with whom, when, where and how, what resources are required and what are the possible obstacles?

III. Measures and their evaluations

It is a good idea to evaluate health-promoting measures and the changes that occur at the workplace. Evaluation makes the joint activity and the results of its efforts visible. Success, and feedback on success motivates people to continue. How do you evaluate the progress of the measures and how do you notice their effects?

The best results are achieved through joint development

1. Principles of joint development

All participants bring their individual expertise and skills to the joint development process. Joint development is continual by nature, but we can outline three initial stages:

- 1) assessment of initial situation.
- 2) setting goals and planning actions.
- 3) implementation and evaluation.

Joint development supports participative leadership and the development of a communal work culture.

2. Joint development is different in different workplaces

Established operating models of co-operation at the workplace, such as existing regular workplace meetings, make joint development easier. If participative decision-making is new at the workplace, it might be a good idea to look at some governance models (e.g. the Primer workshop model https://www.ttl.fi/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/TTL_Primer_2017_NETTI.pdf) or at the beginning to ask for support from, for example, occupational health services.



3. Recipe for success

In joint development, success and effectiveness are the result of many factors. At its best, workplace health promotion is continual and flexible co-operation, and the development of the work environment, community and methods.

SAFE ATMOSPHERE

COMMON GROUND RULES

**TAKING
DIVERSITY INTO ACCOUNT**

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

**ENCOURAGING
PROGRESSION**

**WELL-FUNCTIONING
PRACTICES**



4. Stage by stage - monitoring supports success

Joint development is a process in which each stage creates requirements for the success of the next. The table below contains instructions for successfully implementing each stage and the desired results. It also contains questions to help develop health promotion at each stage at your workplace and how to monitor these.

STAGE	TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE WORKPLACE
I Assessment of initial situation	
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Participants: Who leads, who participates, how do we enable it, or do we make it obligatory, do we invite a representative group or everyone? › Agreeing on responsibilities, the division of work, schedules and ground rules and communicating information (who, how, schedule)
Assessment of situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Using the list of tips, assess the current situation at your workplace. › What do the risk assessment and knowledge base of occupational health services reveal? What about the well-being at work questionnaires? › How high is motivation to promote health?
Demands and effects of work on health and lifestyle habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › What level of health and health behaviour does work require? How do work-related factors affect health and health behaviours?
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Discuss and vote on the priority of the development targets. You can also use the Primer workshop model to help you.





II Setting goals and creating an action plan

Goals

What is most important at your workplace?

- › Choose the health promotion goals for your workplace. Begin by forming an easy, brief interim goal.
- › Set a long-term goal and short-term goals for reaching it. You can have more than one goal, but one is a good start!

How?

- › Get inspired together by brainstorming solutions for working together! Collect information on different alternatives for promoting health and the consequences of different solutions.

Health promotion plan for the workplace

- › It is important to move on from the goals to making an action plan. A health promotion plan describes how actions can bring about change.

III Measures and their evaluation

Be brave and try out different things

- › Encourage and inspire each other to try out the different health promotion methods that you have chosen.

How did we succeed?

- › Evaluate the development work together. It is important to become aware of what works and where it works. What was successful and what benefits did it have?
- › It is also important to examine how the health promotion development work is connected to other development and changes in the workplace's activities. How does other activity support or hinder it?

How do we continue?

- › It's time to reassess the situation. Nothing changes at once: one step at a time. What next?



TOIMIHENKILÖKESKUSJÄRJESTÖ



Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto



Universität zu Köln



TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO

OULUN YLIOPISTO

