

# Employees of medical centers report high stress and negative health behaviors

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Credit: Mayo Clinic

Several national surveys have found that approximately 15 to 20 percent of adults in the U.S. will report high levels of stress. A new study by Mayo Clinic researchers identified stress and burnout as a major

problem employees face within the medical industry, leading to negative health behaviors. With rising stress levels in the workplace for employees, many companies are looking to integrate, engage and enroll employees into wellness programs.

"It's important to teach individuals to monitor their stress levels over time and practice effective, ongoing stress-reduction strategies, such as getting involved in [wellness programs](#), this will in-turn help [health](#) care employees live a happy and health life," says Matthew Clark, Ph.D., lead author of the study and resiliency expert at the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program.

The study, which is published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, measured stress and health behaviors (exercise, nutrition, sleep, etc.) by a series of five annual surveys administered to 676 participants who are employees at Mayo Clinic and have access to a [wellness](#) center. A significant relationship was found between the stress levels of an employee and four domains of quality of life: poor physical health, low mental health, poor nutritional habits and lower perceived overall health. Unfortunately, according to the study, employees who reported high stress levels and perceived poor quality of life also reported the lowest usage of wellness programs.

According to Dr. Clark, "Increasing the awareness of wellness centers and programs in academic medical environments will increase the quality of life of employees and lead to less physician and staff burnout."

Many companies are taking note of burnout and job strain in their staff and have created wellness centers, offer stress reduction programs, provide wellness coaching and healthy sleep programs for their employees in an effort to reduce stress, job strain and burnout. Muscular strength, cardiovascular fitness and flexibility exercises are also beneficial to overall quality of life, Dr. Clark writes.

He adds, "We are beginning to encourage employees to monitor their stress levels and to engage in daily resiliency practices, such as exercise, time with family and friends, meditation or gratitude journaling, to help reduce their [stress levels](#) and improve their quality of life."

Given the significance of stress in the workplace, the researchers note that exploring ways to effectively engage [employees](#) who have high levels of [stress](#) into wellness programs warrants further investigation.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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