

PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

Promoting a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace



Preamble

This guide has been produced within the framework of the National Plan “Gesond iessen, Méi beweegen” 2018-2025, the aim of which is to promote a balanced diet and regular, appropriate physical activity.

The aim of this guide is to provide methodological support for anyone involved in setting up actions to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace.

Investing in the promotion of a balanced diet and physical activity has lasting benefits for health, which contributes to improved performance in the workplace.



What is physical activity and a balanced diet?

Physical activity is any movement produced by skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure.

For example: walking, cycling or running...

To find out more:

gimb.public.lu/en/mei-beweegen



A balanced diet means eating a variety of foods, in the right quantities, and enjoying them.

To find out more:

gimb.public.lu/en/gesund-iessen



Eating a balanced diet and performing regular and adapted physical activity helps to prevent overweight and associated diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Why invest in promoting a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace?

Lasting effects and results also for the company or organization.

A company's success depends on having physically and mentally healthy employees. Several studies have shown that promoting a balanced diet and regular physical activity contributes to the following results:



Promoting a balanced diet and physical activity is a great start. To have an even greater impact, other actions on various health topics can be integrated as and when required. For example: support for the cessation of smoking, or reducing alcohol consumption.

Benefits for the employer and benefits for the employees!

Some key figures



Only 52% of adult residents in Luxembourg eat fruits or vegetables daily

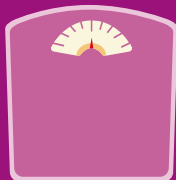
(European Health Interview Survey, 2019)



35% of adult residents in Luxembourg do not engage in any endurance physical activity (e.g. brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming).

(European Health Interview Survey, 2019)

Physical inactivity and an unbalanced diet contribute significantly to an increased risk of all cause mortality on a global scale.



32% of the adults in Luxembourg are overweight.

(European Health Interview Survey, 2019)

The leading causes of death in Luxembourg are cancer and cardiovascular diseases.

(Health Directorate, Statistics on the causes of death in Luxembourg, 2022)

Why invest in promoting a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace?

Take action for public health and the health of employees!

Health is defined as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization).

A balanced diet and regular physical activity protect against overweight, which is one of the risk factors for many non-communicable diseases (e.g. cancers, diabetes). In addition, by being more active (e.g. appropriate warm-up exercises before manual labour, limiting sedentary postures at the office) and by consuming balanced meals (to help stay alert when driving for example) we reduce the risk of accidents at work.



By influencing brain chemistry, our diet also affects mood, memory and even, according to some researchers, decision-making. Eating a balanced diet is associated with good emotional health and can help reduce the symptoms of depression. Vegetables, fruit, nuts and fish are particularly important.



Physical activity also helps to promote psychological well-being as well as helping to manage and reduce stress. It is associated with better mental health and a reduced risk of depression and anxiety. The release of chemical substances in the body during physical activity are linked to your well-being. For example, during exercise, endorphins have euphoric and calming effects, while serotonin and dopamine are responsible for emotional regulation. Physical activity is therefore recommended for the prevention and treatment of pathologies such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, etc.



Studies show that regular physical activity has a beneficial effect on sleep quality, with visible repercussions on well-being, mood and morale, and improves cognitive capacity.

There can be no health without mental health!

How can we promote a balanced diet and regular physical activity at work?

The key principles

Multiple studies have identified the conditions necessary for setting up a successful health promotion programme. These conditions apply to all companies and administrations, whatever their sector or size, and are relevant to promoting a balanced diet and physical activity:

Commitment and involvement of decision-makers, in particular when integrating health promotion into the company's or administration's strategy.

Involvement of employees and representatives through ongoing communication with decision-makers.

Use of a systematic and comprehensive process to ensure effectiveness and continuous improvement. Sufficient material and human resources must be made available.

Sustainability and integration by informing and raising awareness of the importance of promoting health in the workplace.

The participation of all parties involved is essential in any action to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace.

There are numerous benefits for both employers and employees!

Outline of the steps to follow



Figure 1: Outline of the steps to be taken to develop and implement a programme to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace.

What activities can be promoted in the workplace?

This chapter gives examples of actions that can be carried out as part of a programme to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace. We recommend that your programme include at least 2 or 3 of the following activities on diet and physical activity:

Advice and information

Advice and informative activities help to raise awareness among employees.

Care must be taken to ensure that the information is understandable to all and is backed by scientific evidence.

- Providing GIMB tools. For example: advice, recommendations.
- Relay messages from the GIMB programme. For example: “eat carbohydrates with every main meal”, “eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day”.
- Include messages to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in corporate communication tools. For example: intranet, newsletter.
- Organise information meetings and practical training courses run by competent professionals.
- Organise health weeks.





Challenges and competitions

Actions such as challenges and competitions are a good way of strengthening teamwork.

- Team participation in existing sporting events and team training.
- Regular organisation of health and safety days at work.
- Organisation of corporate challenges between employees/divisions/sites/ companies, for example, walking or running step-count challenges (by providing pedometers or signing up to a dedicated smartphone app), corporate runs and other engaging activity challenges etc.
- Proposing individual or team challenges such as: reducing sugar intake, drinking enough water or consuming 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily.



Food on offer

Raw ingredients and home-cooked food, with limited use of commercially prepared or ultra-processed products form the basis of a healthy diet.

An offer adapted to employees requirements and to national recommendations helps to improve access to a balanced diet.

- The provision of fruit baskets and/or vending machines with healthy products.
- Organizing regular balanced breakfasts with employees.
- Improving the offer at company “gatherings” and internal meetings.
- Proposing balanced menus.
- Making cost incentives available for healthy menu options.
- Improving the requirements for catering services with a view to reducing the consumption of salt, saturated fats and sugar. For example: providing smaller salt sachets, making salt and salty foods less easily available, provision of a water fountain, offering a balanced menu, promoting fruit offer and consumption, etc.
- Promoting water instead of sugary drinks (soda, fruit juice, etc.).
- Offering a range of balanced menus/ snacks to suit all appetites.





Physical activity possibilities

An offer tailored to popular demand and requirements helps to encourage and motivate employees to engage in daily physical activity.

- Providing the option to take part in physical activities during working hours.
- Providing free or subsidized memberships to sports clubs or even providing a sports hall, fitness center or sports coach in the workplace.
- Setting up energy breaks or lunch periods and/or organizing active, afterwork sessions or simply encouraging longer lunch breaks to facilitate activity participation.
- Providing ergometers in the office and/or bicycles for work-related, short distance travel.
- Encourage active travel between home and work.
- Providing bicycle parking spaces and electric bike charging stations.
- Using gentle nudging techniques and signs within the company or organization to encourage walkability during working hours (for example, promoting stair use over taking the elevator).

There are many other possible activities to promote a balanced diet and regular physical activity. These activities should be tailored to the needs and priorities of employers and employees.

Self-assessment checklist

This checklist can be used to identify areas for improvement. It can be completed by employers or employees to assess the progress made in setting up a programme to promote a balanced diet and physical activity in the workplace. All the questions are based on the criteria defined by the World Health Organization and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

The checklist can
be downloaded
from

[gimb.public.lu/fr/
publications](http://gimb.public.lu/fr/publications)



Self-assessment checklist

		completed	partially completed	in progress	not started
Step 1: preparation	Set up a working group to plan and implement the programme	A	B	C	D
	Inform all staff about the implementation of the programme	A	B	C	D
	Comply with legal obligations relating to health and safety at work	A	B	C	D
Step 2: planning	Identify needs. To do this, a focus group, or surveys among personnel can be set up or implemented.	A	B	C	D
	Decide on priorities according to the needs identified and define clear, measurable objectives	A	B	C	D
	Link the programme to other occupational health and safety programmes/actions, wherever possible	A	B	C	D
	Incorporate effective, evidence-based actions into the programme	A	B	C	D
	Implement a coordinated programme by linking all actions together	A	B	C	D
	Involve intermediaries such as health services in the workplace, associations specialising in nutrition or physical activity, or the Health Directorate. This can be done by requesting the GIMB label.	A	B	C	D
	Offer the same opportunities to all employees	A	B	C	D
	Consider evaluating results before implementing the programme	A	B	C	D

		completed	partially completed	in progress	not started
Step 3: Implementation	Obtain active and visible support from decision-makers	A	B	C	D
	Involve employees as much as possible	A	B	C	D
	Adapt documents according to the target population	A	B	C	D
Step 4: evaluation	Analyse the impact of the programme based on the evaluation carried out beforehand. For example, the impact can be measured in terms of employee satisfaction or economic factors (absenteeism, staff turnover, etc.)	A	B	C	D
	Evaluate whether the objectives have been achieved, and the financial benefits of the programme	A	B	C	D
	Communicate the results of the evaluation	A	B	C	D
	Do not neglect the planning and improvement process. The final stages do not define the end of the programme. The programme should be constantly adapted. As the final stages are being carried out, it is important to circle back to the beginning of the programme and evaluate it using the newly acquired data	A	B	C	D
	Understand the results in order to plan future actions	A	B	C	D

Results

	score *				total
	A	B	C	D	
Step 1: preparation					
Step 2: planning					
Step 3: implementation					
Step 4: evaluation					
total score					

* Score A (or B or C or D) is the number of times box A (or B or C or D) has been ticked for each step.

	A	B	C	D	Total Value
total score					
Factor					
Value (total score x factor)					
Success of your organisation (Total value/19)					

A = 100, B =67, C =33 et D= 0

Example of how to calculate the score

		completed	partially completed	in progress	not started
Step 1: preparation	Set up a working group to plan and implement the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C	<input type="checkbox"/> D
	Inform all staff about the implementation of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C	<input type="checkbox"/> D
	Comply with legal obligations relating to health and safety at work	<input type="checkbox"/> A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B	<input type="checkbox"/> C	<input type="checkbox"/> D



	score				total
	A	B	C	D	
Step 1: preparation	1	2			3

Become a partner and apply for a GIMB label

Why apply for a GIMB label?

The GIMB Label, supported by the Ministry of Health and Social Security, the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of Education, Children and Youth and the Ministry of Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living Together and Reception of Refugees is part of the National Plan «Gesond iessen, Méi beweegen» 2018-2025.

Promoting
your actions

Provision of
materials and
brochures

The opportunity
to expand your
network

Access to
information and
practical advice on
national
recommendations


Expert support
on the positive
aspects and areas
for improvement
of your project

How do you obtain a label?

Does your project focus on promoting a balanced diet and/or physical activity, and is it in the public interest and without any commercial purpose?

We invite you to fill in the application form no later than 6 weeks before the start of your project: gimb.public.lu/fr/label/critere-et-demande

If you have any questions, get in touch with us via email: gimb@ms.etat.lu



For further
information
gimb.public.lu

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The masculine form is used throughout this text for readability reasons only.

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