

# NEWS RELEASE



*For Immediate Release*

## **Study: Walking Ranks as the Preferred Exercise Option for the Majority of Americans Amid COVID-19**

*Fourth-annual UnitedHealthcare Wellness Checkup Survey finds that 30% of Americans say they are now more likely to receive the annual flu shot this year due to the ongoing pandemic*

**MINNETONKA, Minn. (July 29, 2020)** — More than two-thirds of Americans surveyed who work out said walking has been their preferred exercise option amid COVID-19, while one in five said the pandemic has encouraged them to improve their eating habits, according to a new nationwide survey.

These are some of the findings from the 2020 UnitedHealthcare *Wellness Checkup Survey*, which examines people's opinions about health topics and preferences, providing insights to help improve well-being and disease-management programs offered by employers. The survey's key findings include:

- **Walking and Running Rank as Top Exercise Options Amid COVID-19.** Most survey respondents who work out said walking (68%) has been their preferred method of exercise since COVID-19 emerged, followed by running (28%), body-weight exercises (23%), cycling (21%) and weight training at home (18%). More than three-quarters (77%) of baby boomers preferred walking over other forms of exercise, as did 72% of Generation X. As for eating habits, 30% of survey respondents said their diet is worse now than before COVID-19 impacted daily life, while 21% said their nutrition choices have improved.
- **Many People Plan to Get Regular Flu Shot, Modify Workplace Habits.** While researchers race to develop a vaccine against COVID-19, 30% of respondents said they are now more likely to receive the annual flu shot this fall. In regard to common workplace norms, one-third (34%) of employed respondents said they would stop shaking hands at work no matter the circumstance; 35% would use an alternative physical greeting such as a fist or elbow bump; and 31% said they would continue handshakes despite potential risks of COVID-19 infection. Baby boomers were the most likely to give up handshakes (45% said they would stop), followed by members of Generation X (33%).
- **Majority of Employees Say Wellness Programs Have Improved Their Health, Productivity.** More than three-quarters (77%) of survey respondents who are employed and have access to wellness programs said the initiatives have made a positive impact on their health. Nearly half (48%) said the programs motivated them to pay more attention to their health; 38% said they helped lower stress; 36% said they increased physical activity; and 33% reported improved sleep. According to the survey, wellness programs helped 17% of respondents manage a chronic condition such as diabetes, while 17% said the health initiatives helped detect a disease or medical issue.

As for job performance among those who said the wellness programs made a positive impact on their health, 54% of employees said the initiatives helped reduce stress; 51% said they improved productivity; and 31% said they took fewer sick days. Among employees without access to

wellness programs, 71% of respondents said they would be interested in such initiatives if offered.

“Now is an opportune time for Americans to make an investment in their health, with employers in a crucial role to foster healthy habits among employees in the workplace and while working at home,” said Rebecca Madsen, UnitedHealthcare chief consumer officer. “The UnitedHealthcare *Wellness Checkup Survey* highlights the importance of implementing robust well-being programs that may foster whole-person health, reduce absenteeism and curb care costs.”

Many U.S. companies are investing in wellness programs, with more than two-thirds (67%) of companies planning to expand these initiatives during the next few years, according to a [study by the National Business Group on Health](#). A [separate study published in JAMA Network](#) concluded that employees with access to wellness programs reported an 8 percentage point increase in regular exercise and a 13 percentage point improvement in actively managing their weight.

### **About the Survey**

The UnitedHealthcare *Wellness Checkup Survey* was conducted May 18-20, 2020, using ENGINE’s Online CARAVAN® survey among a representative sample of 1,004 adults ages 18 and older living in the continental United States. The margin of error was plus or minus 3.1% at the 95% confidence level. A supplemental survey among employed adults was conducted May 20-21. For complete survey results, [click here](#).

### **About UnitedHealthcare**

UnitedHealthcare is dedicated to helping people live healthier lives and making the health system work better for everyone by simplifying the health care experience, meeting consumer health and wellness needs, and sustaining trusted relationships with care providers. In the United States, UnitedHealthcare offers the full spectrum of health benefit programs for individuals, employers, and Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and contracts directly with more than 1.3 million physicians and care professionals, and 6,500 hospitals and other care facilities nationwide. The company also provides health benefits and delivers care to people through owned and operated health care facilities in South America. UnitedHealthcare is one of the businesses of UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), a diversified health care company. For more information, visit UnitedHealthcare at [www.uhc.com](http://www.uhc.com) or follow @UHC on Twitter.

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