

UPS Healthy Connections – Informed Choices in the News

Excerpt from **Orlando Sentinel**

His weight had been a problem for several years, but it wasn't until December that Sengpheth Vongsomsack learned from a company-mandated annual physical that he was borderline diabetic.

A sales-finance lender with BB&T Corp. in Orlando, the 30-year-old Vongsomsack took the news as a wake-up call. And he didn't have to look far for help: All 29,000-plus BB&T employees see a nurse at least once a year, and those who need help are assigned their own nurse, or "health coach," whom they see every four months or so.

Vongsomsack credits his health coach with getting him on the right track. He says he's making smarter decisions about what he eats and exercising regularly, walking laps every workday around his south Orlando office building,

Company-sponsored health coaches are on the upswing nationwide, benefits experts say, as businesses -- especially large ones -- search for new ways to slow the fast-rising cost of their employees' health insurance.

In Central Florida, big-name employers whose medical coverage offers coaching of one sort or another include BB&T, United Parcel Service and Progress Energy.

Brant Woodard, a call-center manager with UPS in Hillsborough County, isn't overweight but, like Vongsomsack, found out last year that he's at risk of developing diabetes. A health coach "has kept me on task," said Woodard, 48, who now walks at least four nights a week on a treadmill at home. "You know somebody is going to follow up with you. It's not like a doctor, who tells you what to do but isn't going to follow up."

UPS, which rolled out its program to more than 100,000 nonunionized employees in mid-2006 and to the rest of its 285,000-person work force in February, provides coaches mainly to employees who have, or are at risk of having, diabetes, asthma, coronary heart disease or congestive heart failure.

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