

## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT FOR HEALTHIER EMPLOYEES AND COST SAVINGS

BlueShield of Northeastern New York Implements A New and Effective Employee Health Program

### Rethinking Employee Health

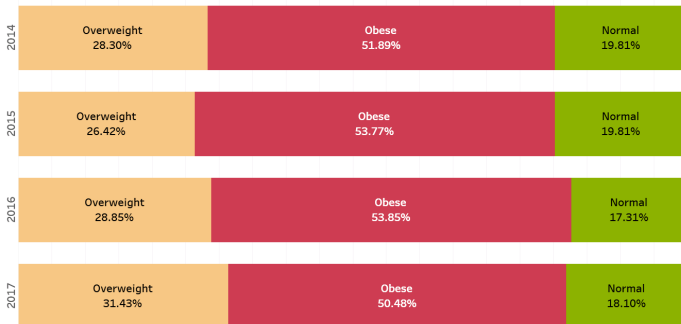
Workplace obesity is a common problem among employees at many companies across the nation. The costs of treating weight-related health issues for employees can exceed **\$4.3 billion annually**, and with lower productivity while at work, costing employers *\$506 per obese worker per year*.

With these figures in mind, BlueShield of Northeastern New York (BSNENY) decided to take a pro-active approach to this problem regarding its own employees.

Statistically, BSNENY had an obesity rate among its population at around 53.85%. From 2012 – 2015 this figure had rose steadily with no intervention program in place.

Then in 2015, BSNENY partnered with NutriSavings to address the growing obesity majority of the BSNENY employees.

NutriSavings supports healthcare companies and wellness providers in their efforts to educate consumers on healthy eating. Their program also rewards good food choices with savings at the supermarket, generating incentives for healthier eating that can reduce healthcare costs.



**Yearly Breakdown of BSNENY Employee BMI Statistics: Obesity vs. Healthy Weight.**

To meet BSNENY's specific needs, NutriSavings rebranded its *NutriSavings Advantage* program to *Healthy Life Rewards*, rolling it out to BSNENY's insured population on Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

BSNENY's objective for this employee wellness plan was to engage its population in an innovative way, inspiring them to make better choices at the supermarket and adopt an overall healthier lifestyle—reducing corporate healthcare costs in the process.

### Making Better Choices

NutriSavings' focused wellness solution scores all food products on a proprietary nutrition scale from 0 to 100 that measures the nutrient density of foods, and tracks food purchases at grocery stores using grocery loyalty cards or other unique identifiers. The lower the score, the less nutritional value the food item has to offer. For example: a simple cookie might have a value of 10 as opposed to a serving of *non-fat greek yogurt* with a score of 90.

*NutriSavings' proprietary algorithm rates over 100,000 foods and growing!*

The Healthy Life Rewards program works like any other employee benefit plan: the employee signs up for the program, creates an account with the NutriSavings system, registers their grocer loyalty card(s), and starts shopping.

As their purchases are tracked, scores are given for the various food items, and based on their

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purchases, incentives are generated for the employee...leading to healthier purchases.

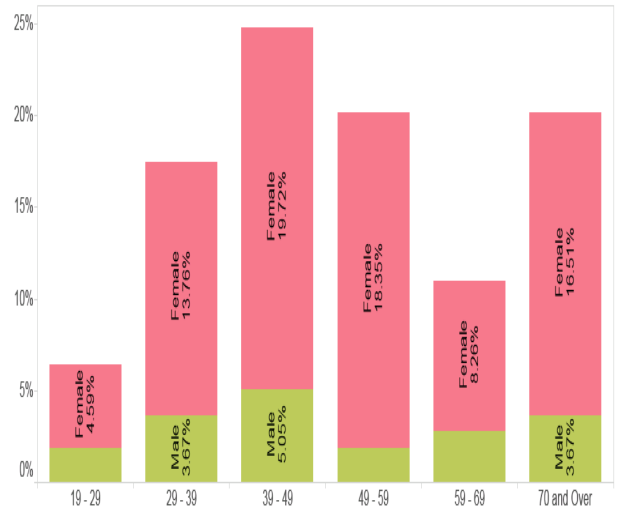
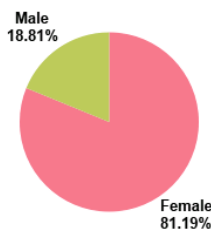
The overall benefits become apparent in short order. In the case of BSNENY, there was a significant change in three employee health categories:

- **Obese population:** Showed a drop of 5.73% (as compared with 2016). This was the first decline recorded in the obese population in years prior
- **Overweight population:** Showed an increase of 8.21% (as compared to 2016). Even though this group increased, the growth rate slowed down (as compared to 2015) by 0.21%
- **Normal population:** Showed an increase of 4.36% (as compared to 2016)

### Numbers Don't Lie

The BSNENY employee population consisted of 300 participating members in the Healthy Life Rewards program. The demographic breakdown is expressed by the following:

- Average age: 51 years old
- Percentage of males: 18.81%
- Percentage of females: 81.19%
- 25% of eligible user were between the ages of 39 – 49 years old



**Demographic Breakdown of BSNENY Employees in Healthy Life Rewards Program.**

The NutriSavings rollout plan included classroom training for sales, marketing, customer service, and product teams to create an environment for easy collaboration and education.

The participation rate of the program started out with a conservative 40%; however, that number continued to steadily climb. As of April 2017, 18 months after the launch of the Healthy Life Rewards program, **BSNENY employee population had an impressive 83% participation rate.** Furthermore, program participants logged in **over 7500 grocery-shopping trips!**

### Biometric Testing

For a period of four years between 2012 and 2016, BSNENY employees underwent a series of voluntary Biometric Testing. The statistical markers that employees were tested for consisted of: height, weight, and calculated BMI (i.e. *Body Mass Index*).

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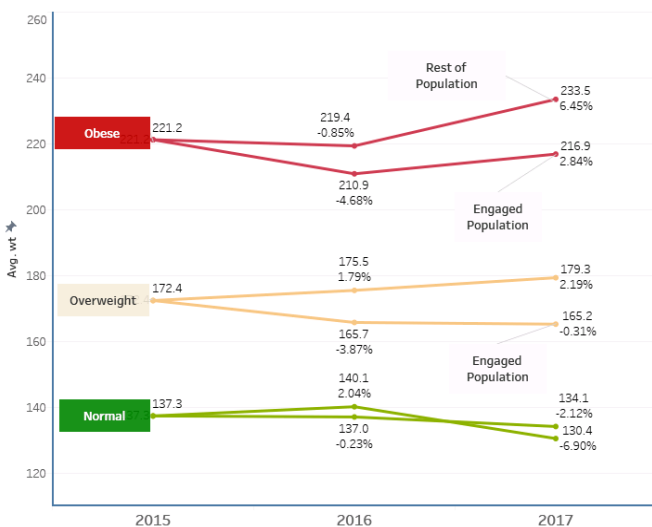
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These factors were essential in determining the overall effectiveness of the Health Life Rewards program—especially BMI.

Adding the NutriSavings employee benefit program to the 2015 biometric data for BSNEY, revealed that the participating BSNEY employee population showed a reduction in weight across obese and overweight BMI classifications, such as:

- Employees in the *obese category* showed an improvement of 3.61%
- Employees in the *overweight category* showed a decrease of 0.31% of body weight

A decrease in weight across BMI classifications over the two-year period (2015 – 2017) revealed that the introduction of *NutriSavings accelerated weight loss endeavors for the participating BSNEY population.*



BSNEY Healthy Life Rewards Program BMI Results for Participating Employees 2015 - 2017

“We’ve seen a dramatic change in the overall health of our employees since adopting this program. The results are amazing.”  
~Dr. Kirk Pennenton, BSNEY

## NutriSavings Triggers Behavioral Change

Weight loss is a complex process involving food habits, taste preferences, affordability, access to better food choices (e.g. organic, highly-nutritious, low Glycemic Index, protein enriched, low fat/calorie, zero trans-fats, no preservatives, and farm fresh), exercise, and of course the desire to change.

To accurately analyze NutriSavings’ influence on behavioral change, a comprehensive basket analysis and a review of shopping patterns were performed. This included trending sixteen food categories such as: produce, deserts, drinks, snacks, coffee, dairy, meats, grains, etc.

Additionally communications and rewards were utilized to nudge the population towards positive behavior change.

Highlighted results of the program’s employee behavioral changes were:

### Obese Population

- In 2017, the population had reduced its soda and sweetened beverage purchases by 5.48%
- Salty snacks intake was reduced by 16.07% in 2017
- Increased dairy and grains as total basket share
- An area noted for improvement opportunity was overall produce

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consumption, which saw no significant improvement

### Overweight Population

- This group successfully maintained produce levels at 22% of their overall basket composition
- There was an 11.68% decrease in dessert purchases, which has the potential to influence overall weight control and BMI

### Normal Population

- Significant reduction in desserts and soda/sweetened beverages
- Meaningful increase of 7.7% in whole grains
- Decrease in prepared meals, which is often high in fat and sodium
- Maintained high percentage of produce in basket share

The most dramatic of these changes were in the categories of sugar and sodium food purchases.

*The USDA recommends that individuals should not consume more than 50 grams of sugar and 2300 milligrams of sodium daily.*

The following data graphs reveal the influence of NutriSavings and BSNENY's Healthy Life Rewards program on reducing both sugar and sodium intake for the BSNENY program population.

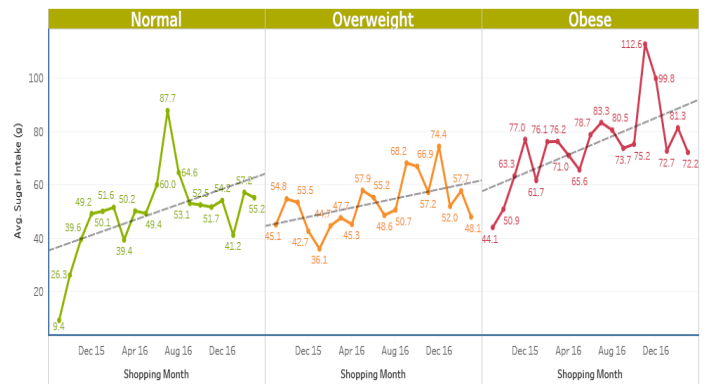
### Sugar

- **Obese population** down from an all-time high of 112.6 grams to 72.2 grams in Dec. 2016.

- **Overweight population** down from an all-time high of 74.4 grams to 48.1 grams in Dec. 2016
- **Normal population** down from an all-time high of 87.7 grams to an all-time low of 41.2 grams from Aug. 2016 – Dec. 2016, rising slightly to 55.2 grams.

### Sodium

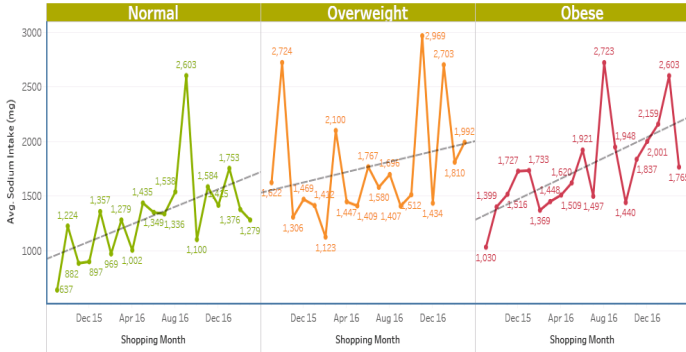
- **Obese population** down from an all-time high of 2,723 milligrams to 1,765 milligrams from Aug. 2016 – Dec. 2016.
- **Overweight population** down from an all-time high of 2,969 milligrams to an all-time low of 1,810 milligrams from Aug. 2016 – Dec. 2016, rising slightly to 1,992 milligrams.
- **Normal population** down from an all-time high of 2,603 milligrams to an all-time low of 1,100 from Aug. 2016 – Dec. 2016, rising slightly to 1,279 milligrams.



**Sugar Intake Reduction for BSNENY Employees in Healthy Life Rewards Program**

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**Sodium Intake Reduction for BSNEY in Healthy Life Rewards Program**

## Cost Savings and Positive Impact

The modest effects represented in this case study provide strong evidence of the efficacy that the NutriSavings program can provide for any organization willing to partner with us.

BSNEY's Healthy Life Rewards program has clearly benefited its engaged employees in:

- Overall weight management (i.e. determined through biometric data)
- Healthier food purchasing choices and positive behavioral changes
- On-going employee engagement (e.g. 7,500+ shopping trips)
- Automatically logged and tabulated program data, resulting in a high degree of reliable objectivity
- Greater employee incentives to buy and eat healthier foods
- Reduced sugar intake
- Reduced sodium intake
- And a projected cost savings of **over \$28,000 annually**

Further research, targeted interventions (such as exercise and fitness center employee benefits), and on-going participation will also ensure that

these improved health and wellness results continue to grow in BSNEY's future.

"The NutriSavings program is one of BSNEY's crown jewels in our employee benefits package!"  
~Telly Jones, BSNEY

*NutriSavings' nutrition focused program has quantifiably produced a positive impact on the employees at BlueShield of Northeastern New York.*

## About the Authors



**Niraj Jetly**, Chief Operating Officer & CIO of Nutrisavings, is a nationally recognized award winning business leader and digital strategist with a strong background in technology. His work has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, NPR, IDG, Boston Globe, Employee Benefit News, and CIO magazine. Mr. Jetly serves on the board of Worksite Wellness Council of Massachusetts and Gluten Intolerance Group.



**Matthew Rienhardt**, Product Manager, BlueShield of Northeastern New York  
As a product manager Matt strives to create compelling products & positive brand differentiation in the health insurance market.

A good example of Matt's work is Healthy Life Rewards, a nutrition program that provides consumers with a financial incentive for purchasing healthy foods at their local grocery stores. The aforesaid nutrition program has created positive market differentiation for the BlueShield brand while inspiring positive consumer behavior.

Contact us at [info@nutrisavings.com](mailto:info@nutrisavings.com) or call 800-344-3595 to get your employees healthy today!