

THE LATEST

Serta Simmons brings healthcare to the factory floor

BY CHRISTOPHER CAVANAUGH

When Steven Wilkinson began his job as senior director of total rewards at Serta Simmons Bedding four years ago, finding better healthcare ranked high on his priority list.

“I was looking for a way to engage our employees on their health and well-being,” he says. “We did some surveys and focus groups with employees and found that unless we could come to them, bring the health checkup to them, most were not going to get the preventive care they needed — even though it’s provided in their health plan.”

Serta Simmons Bedding is North America’s largest bedding manufacturer. The wholesaler’s headquarters is in Atlanta, and the company is best known for its mattresses the Serta Perfect Sleeper and Simmons Beauty Rest. The company employs about 6,000 people in 39 manufacturing plants across North America.

Wilkinson and his team started researching ways to bring healthcare to the employees. But it was tricky.

“We have a lot of employees at many factories, they’re not all in one place, a clinic wouldn’t work for us,” Simmons says. They started looking around. “We heard about Catapult Healthcare, and it was exactly what we were looking for — like a match made in heaven. With Catapult we began our onsite health checkups at all our factories in 2016.”

Catapult Health of Dallas is a national healthcare practice that brings preventive

checkups to the worksite. Each checkup includes diagnostic blood work, vitals, a full medical history, a personal health report and a private consultation with a board certified nurse practitioner. It takes about 35 minutes for each individual. The fees are processed through the company’s health plan as a claim for preventive care.

According to David Michel, CEO of Catapult Health, it’s about half the cost of a typical brick and mortar checkup in most areas. Catapult, which has more 500 clients nationwide, serves both large and small employers.

“Catapult is all about reinventing the way basic and preventive primary care is delivered,” Michel says. “We’ve made it very simple, very efficient from both a time and cost perspective and now it’s proving to be very effective.”

In a recent three-year study conducted at a large employer in Texas, with Catapult serving employees, the employer saw a 14% decrease in metabolic syndrome, a 37% decrease in hypertension, a 49% decrease in pre-diabetes, and a 23% increase in controlled diabetes.

At Serta Simmons, a Catapult team comes into a factory where employees are scheduled for their checkups. The checkup starts with three drops of blood. While lab-accurate measurements are processed, vitals such as weight, height, blood pressure and BMI are taken. A personal health history is reviewed, along with a family history and a review of current medications, and there’s a cancer screening.

After the blood measurements and physical checks are complete, the patient has a virtual consultation with a nurse practitioner, which also includes a symptoms discussion. The nurse practitioner then gives direction

for further care with referrals, and a personal action plan.

Immediate lifesaving benefits

Engaging employees in their personal healthcare brings benefits to the individuals and the company.

“Our research shows that about 20% of employees are up to date on their annual preventive care. That means 80% are not,” says Michel. According to Wilkinson, “about half our male population did not even have a primary care physician. We have a service now that provides education, coaching, and engages them to connect with a local physician.”

At Serta Simmons about 60% of the employees had onsite physicals in the first year, and they’re on track to reach 70% this year.

“We are in our third year, so we’re getting better at engaging employees. We’ve run some contests and offered incentives like gift cards to bring people in. But we also have many employees asking us: “When is Catapult coming back? I want to see how my numbers are doing.”

Some Serta Simmons employees saw immediate, perhaps lifesaving, benefits.

“We had a couple cases of high blood pressure where the people were in danger of a stroke, and they were sent to a local hospital immediately,” Wilkinson explains. “We also had a woman who in the process of her physical had a growth discovered. She was referred for further treatment, and the pre-cancerous tumor was removed.”

“Companies are at their best when they try to engage employees in their health and well-being,” Wilkinson says. “I’ve been in this arena for over 30 years, and I’ve tried a lot of things. This is the best thing I’ve ever seen.”