

Workplace Wellness Strategies FactSheet

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The Workplace Wellness Fact Sheet addressed the findings of a study reported in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Volume 43, #6, June 2001*. This four-year study among long-term employees used a Health Risk Appraisal to determine that the medical cost of those employees at high-risk exceeded the costs of those of their healthier co-workers.

This Fact Sheet will look at, in detail, the strategies of proper eating habits, exercise, weight loss, stress reduction, and time management in order to provide information to assist those who wish to improve their health and well-being

Proper Eating Habits

Begin by adding more whole grains, unrefined foods, natural products, fruits and vegetables to the diet. Healthier foods will result in a healthier you.

- Reduce the intake of meat and fish to reduce the amount of additives and toxins that end up in your body's fat deposits.
- The larger the animal or fish you choose to eat, the higher the levels of antibiotics and mercury contained in the creature's fat.
- Fish currently contain such high levels of mercury that it is recommended that no one eat more than one can of tuna a week.
- Reduce the intake of refined sugars like candy bars and soft drinks to keep the body's insulin levels from see-sawing. This will help prevent type 2 diabetes. It will also help contribute to weight loss.
- Choose whole wheat pasta, whole grain bread and cereals.
- Add dry bean or peas, tofu or cottage cheese to your diet.
- Try reduced-fat cheeses, fat-free yogurt, egg whites, and low or no-fat milk
- To reduce the amount of sugar you use in your tea or coffee, sip the drink first before you add the sugar – you won't need to use as much sugar that way.



Exercise

A moderate amount of exercise every day can contribute greatly to our health. Thirty minutes a day, broken down into 10-minute increments helps keep our circulation going efficiently. Bad things happen to the body when it remains in one posture for too long.

We need to maintain our upper body strength and bone mass (cutting back on soft drinks will help with bone mass). Strength training and moderate weight lifting also helps in this area.

- Aerobic exercise, which is any exercise that increases the heart beat, is important for heart health.
- Exercises that maintain flexibility and balance are also important, especially as we get older.
- Walking, swimming, yoga, tai chi, dancing, gardening, mopping the floor, any vigorous activity can improve not only our physical, but our mental abilities as well.
- There are exercises and stretches that we can perform right at our desk to improve our health.
- An important addition to the diet is water, at least 8 glasses a day. Often when we feel hungry, we are actually in need of water. Most of us are dehydrated and don't realize it.

Exercise can do much towards reducing weight, lowering blood pressure and reducing cholesterol.

Weight Loss

The first thing to do about weight loss is to think about it. You can't accomplish anything without visualizing it first. Barring actual physical ailments that prevent weight loss, we simply have to reduce the size of the portions we eat and exercise more by walking at first. In other words we have to burn off more calories than we take in to our bodies.

- Smaller portions on a smaller plate will help.

- Eating fewer sugars and fats can make a big difference. One teaspoon of mayonnaise daily can contribute 10 pounds to our body weight in one year.
- Patience is another contribution to success. Be patient with yourself and don't expect immediate results.
- Keep a food diary and write down everything you eat each day. This is just another way to be aware of what goes into your mouth. When we eat emotionally, we often don't realize what we're doing until the entire tub of ice cream has been eaten.
- Eat fewer sweets, pies, donuts, and sugary treats.
- Eat fewer refined foods like white bread, white rice, foods made with white flour, and fast foods.

Like anything else, we should consult a doctor before beginning any major lifestyle change.

Stress Reduction

There are many ways in which negative stress can take its toll. Problems with relationships at home and at work, work overload, money management, unfounded fears, all create stress and lead to a loss of mental and physical wellness.

Stress manifests in poor health, exaggerated bad habits, depression, and sleep loss.

Very few people operate well on less than 8 hours sleep a night. Since sleep is often the easiest stress-creating problem to remedy, actions that help provide a good night's sleep will be emphasized. Sleeping well requires some preparation.

- We need to eat dinner before 8 pm so that the food has time to digest, and not create indigestion and acid reflux.
- Stick to a regular bedtime, even on the weekends. Staying up late on the weekends and trying to make it to work on time on Monday morning results in the equivalent of jet lag.
- It makes sense not to watch shows that drive up our adrenaline before bedtime. If you love a particularly exciting show, tape it and watch it early in the next evening.
- Develop a ritual of relaxing activities and

habits for the hour before bed. Try soothing music or use a white noise generator to help relax you.

- Practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques prior to sleep.
- Try journal writing to help relieve anxieties, starting and ending with a positive entry.
- If you are lying awake, try reciting the "Gratitude Alphabet." Start with A and think of all the things that begin with A that you are grateful for, then go on to B – it's likely that you won't reach Z.
- If you really cannot sleep, don't lie awake tossing and turning. Get up and do some calming activity like reading a book (but not a murder mystery – something non-fiction).
- If sleep has been elusive for several nights, stay up until after midnight, but get up at the same time as usual. Studies show that we get our best and deepest sleep after midnight. This will work as long as you don't make a habit of it.
- Avoid cigarettes and alcohol for at least 3 hours before bed, and don't drink coffee after 2 pm.
- Repeat the same rituals before going to bed to get the mind into the frame for settling down to sleep.

Time Management

We are guilty of trying to pack too much into our lives, making our to-do lists too long.

We over-schedule ourselves and our family. We need to pare down our activities and shorten the to-do list. Try some of the following suggestions:

- Plan ahead so you can consolidate tasks and errands, (this also cuts down on your gasoline bill).
- Spend time with people you like and who support your goals and ideals.
- Remember to ask for what you want. Your family cannot read your mind. If you don't ask the question, you won't get a yes or a no answer.

- Get your family to help out with household chores and remember, according to Quentin Crisp, after four years the dust doesn't get any deeper.
- Take care of yourself. You are of no help to others if you are burned out.
- Join organizations that interest you – you will find yourself in the company of like-minded people.
- Think positively! Whenever you hear yourself thinking something negative, find a positive affirmation before you move on, it will leave a better taste in your mouth and your mind.

If you follow the tips and strategies outlined in the above fact sheet, you will find yourself healthier, happier, and life much more enjoyable. Remember to leave the past in the past. It is only a guide for what to do or avoid in the present. Set goals for yourself – as a wise woman once said, if you don't know where you are going, then any road will do.

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