



Promoting Health & Wellness at Work

Be well: Practicing health and wellness at work

According to the Government's Policy on Reducing Obesity and Improving Diet published earlier this year, 'In England, most people are overweight or obese. This includes 61.3% of adults and 30% of children aged between 2 and 15. People who are overweight have a higher risk of getting type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. Excess weight can also make it more difficult for people to find and keep work, and it can affect self-esteem and mental health.'¹



'Health problems associated with being overweight or obese cost the NHS more than £5 billion every year,'² it continued. Moreover, in the Tackling Obesity Update published by the National Audit Office, sickness absence attributable to obesity is estimated to cost the country between 15.5 and 16m days/year.³ With these statistics in mind it's clear to see why Corporate Wellness Programmes are gaining popularity everywhere from global organisations to SMEs.

Practicing health and wellness should be an important part of daily life and it carries with it an array of physical, mental and emotional benefits, all of which are essential to a productive and successful personal - and professional - life.

Wellness is an all-encompassing concept. It's about combining the practice of preventative behaviours and adopting a healthy lifestyle over the long-term. There's so much more to good health and wellness than the simple advice of 'an apple a day ...' In fact though, it all comes down to four simple rules that you, as an employer and role model, can help to solidify: Sleep well, eat well, stay hydrated and get moving.

Let this Blue Paper act as a guide to developing a corporate wellness programme of your own. It begins with an overview of what to consider before beginning and follows with four sections that expand on each of the four rules, including easy-to-implement workplace initiatives and individual ideas for each.

Take advantage of this leadership opportunity to help your employees become happier, healthier versions of themselves and experience the benefits of wellness at work!

¹ "Reducing Obesity and Improving Diet." Gov.UK. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reducing-obesity-and-improving-diet/>>

² Ibid.

³ "An update on the government's approach to tackling obesity." National Audit Office. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/tackling_obesity_update.pdf>

Meeting wellness needs at work

Wellness programmes have been growing in popularity for over 20 years, over time, however, they've become noticeably more in-tune with the notion of 'self-care' which means giving employees the tools to take the lead when it comes to their own health.

As David Mobbs, Nuffield Health, Group Chief Executive said at the 2012 Wellbeing in the Workplace event: "It is not practical or desirable for the state to intervene in everyday lifestyle decisions on a mass scale, therefore, the solutions to the health challenges facing the UK lie outside of the NHS. Employers and individuals need to work together to create the right conditions to improve the UK population's wellbeing alongside UK PLC's competitiveness and productivity."⁴

When it comes to business, the savings to be made by investing in and implementing a wellness programme can be substantial. According to the Workplace Wellness Alliance, the calculation of return on investment (ROI) of workplace wellness programmes extends further than financial value alone.⁵

Using data from 25 Alliance registered companies covering nearly two million employees in 125 countries around the world to measure programs and their effects, its 'Making the Right Investment: Employee Health and the Power of Metrics' study found diseases related to dietary behaviour, which lead to conditions such as obesity and type-2 diabetes, currently dominated the area of workplace wellness.⁶

Once you've decided to take the concept of a wellness programme to the next level, you'll need to take care of a few administrative items:

- **Create a committee.**⁷ Designate a group of interested and committed employees to serve on a wellness committee. They will be responsible for recruitment, programme promotion and activity or event planning. Be sure to include members from different departments, shifts and locations if that's relevant in your organisation. They should plan on



⁴ "Employee Wellbeing is the new corporate social responsibility model." Nuffield Health. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.nuffieldhealth.com/corporate-wellbeing/news/employee-wellbeing/>>

⁵ "ROI of Workplace Wellness Programs Goes Beyond 'Mere Dollars Save.'" The Workplace Wellness Campaign. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.workplacewellnesscampaign.org/index.php/in-the-media/wellness-in-the-news/172-roi-of-workplace-wellness-programs-goes-beyond-mere-dollars-save/>>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Wisconsin Worksite Wellness 2010." Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health and Wisconsin Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program. Dec. 2010. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/Worksite/Worksitepdfs/2010Step2.pdf>>.

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meeting on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

- **Name a coordinator.**⁸ If you haven't already done so, get the committee to appoint a coordinator to oversee the project. Choose someone who will be a great ambassador and role model, someone who will be dedicated to the programme, believes in the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and wants to help others to become more mindful of their own wellness. If you haven't got anyone in-house, see if a local gym or personal trainer could work with you on a corporate basis.
- **Set aside a budget.** The amount you'll need will depend on the size and scope of the programme you intend to introduce and whether or not you plan on running it with in-house staff or an outside specialist. Whatever sum you decide to invest with 'sick days' costing businesses in Britain £millions each year even a small sum set aside could go a long way.
- **Start the conversation.** Start a buzz with emails, posters on notice boards, or even a small advert included in wage slips. Talk about the investment of time and money that the company will invest and clarify the objectives of the programme but remember to keep the emphasis on the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the positive impact it will have on staff both personally and professionally.
- **Arrange for a specialist to visit.** Bring in a health care professional to speak to your staff about wellness and the advantages of a healthier lifestyle. You can choose to hold it during the lunch hour and offer a healthy lunch, or you can make it a special event at a different time. Use this event as a chance to distribute more specific information about the programme overall.
- **Offer a health-risk assessment.**⁹ To really bring the message home, offer a free health-risk assessment. Enlist a local health care facility to help you or contract a company, like Nuffield, that specialises in workplace wellness. Set aside time for employees to get a snapshot look at their current state of health thus allowing them to gauge their level of wellness.



⁸ "Health and Wellness in the Workplace: Ideas for Health Promotion Activities." Infinite Wellness Solutions. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.infinetwellnessolutions.com/health-and-wellness-in-the-workplace.html>>.
⁹ "How to Encourage Health and Wellness at Work." Intuit. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://smallbusiness.intuit.com/news/Work/home-balance/19367179/How-to-Encourage-Health-and-Wellness-at-Work.jsp>>.

As word of your new corporate wellness programme starts to spread, you may be a little overwhelmed by enquiries about it. So it's a good idea to keep the programme simple and focus on the handful of problems areas you intend to address. As an example, consider the four basic rules to wellness we mentioned earlier: Sleep well, eat well, stay hydrated and get moving.

Sleep well: Aim for 6-8 hours each night

Full-time employees in the UK work longer hours than the European Union average, according to data from the Office for National Statistics. The UK average of 42.7 hours compares with 41.6 across the EU.¹⁰ Outside of work there is time spent with family and friends, day-to-day errands and other commitments which can make you wonder how you're going to fit in the recommended number of hours of sleep - about 56 a week.



It's no easy task to make that kind of time, but our bodies are expert communicators when it comes to a lack of sleep: fatigue, moodiness and reticence to undertake any unnecessary challenges ... we all know that feeling. However, more often than not, insufficient sleep has less to do with trouble falling asleep and more to do with ineffective stress management throughout the day.

Risks, benefits and ways to work it into the workplace

Insufficient sleep is no laughing matter. According to a University of Chicago study, sleep loss inhibits basic metabolic functions like processing and storing carbs and regulating hormone secretion.¹¹ And, in the long term, inadequate sleep tendencies are linked to an array of health problems - serious ones - like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.¹² The less sleep, the greater the risk of a diagnosis like the ones above, all of which can shorten life.

More immediately, sleep deprivation impacts judgement, mood and one's ability to learn and retain information,¹³ which leads us onto the concept of presenteeism. Presenteeism is a serious problem whereby workers are on-site and on the payroll, but working at a lower rate of productivity. Eliminate presenteeism and bump up productivity with a wellness programme that

¹⁰ "UK employees work longer hours than most EU neighbours." *bbc.co.uk/news*. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-16082186>>.

¹¹ Cathy Gerard. "Boost Your Metabolic Power Hour by Hour." *Muscle & Fitness* Sept. 2012: 80-83. Print.

¹² "Sleep and Disease Risk." *Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School*. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences/sleep-and-disease-risk>>.

¹³ "Consequences of Insufficient Sleep." *Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School*. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://healthysleep.med.harvard.edu/healthy/matters/consequences>>.

highlights the benefits of sleep.

Emphasise the importance of sleep as an integral element of your employees' wellness routines with these workplace ideas:

- **Bring in a sleep specialist.** Bring in someone qualified to talk about some of the common sleep problems your employees may have. Ensure there is enough time for a presentation and a discussion so that your team has a chance to ask questions and interact with your guest.
- **Flexibility.** If your business can accommodate it, consider allowing staff the flexibility to come in later (as long as they don't miss any meetings) and put in the same amount of work before leaving for the day.
- **Combat fatigue with power naps.** In case one of your team members hits a wall and can't seem to recover, encourage them to take a short nap. Power naps generally don't exceed 20 minutes, but despite the short time frame, they can be just the ticket to renewed awareness and a rejuvenated sense of creativity. If your employees take advantage of a power nap, have a system in place to ensure they're making up for time lost while they catch up on counting their sheep.



At the end of the day, we cannot function without sleep. It is time for our bodies to come down from the elevated and taxing stress levels that too often define the working day. Take small steps to give your body enough rest time and help your employees to do the same before they become a chronic disease statistic. Here are some ways to practice individual wellness when it comes to sleeping:

- **Get into a routine.** Our bodies are clocks. As such, it's crucial to keep your body on a schedule, one that remains similar whether the next day is a working one or a weekend/leisure day.
- **The bed is for sleeping.** Avoid eating and drinking in bed and eliminate distractions like television or a laptop.
- **Restrict caffeine.** Make 2pm your last call for caffeine and limit alcohol consumption as you near bedtime.
- **Meditate.** Because sleeplessness is often the result of unmanaged stress, resolve to deal with stress as soon as you feel necessary.

Meditation is a tried-and-tested way to manage the effects of stress. Morning, afternoon or night: Find a time to call your own, sit quietly and gather your thoughts. In fact, more and more companies are incorporating meditation into their stress reduction programmes.¹⁴

Use your wellness programme participants as a resource. Ask them how they changed their sleep routine and which methods worked best for them. Consider compiling individual tips from your team to share. Not only is this an effective way to collect and disseminate information, it's also an effective in-house marketing campaign that instills a sense of purpose among those who are taking part in the new wellness programme.

Eat well: Get into good eating habits

Poor diet (in addition to a sedentary lifestyle) is the primary cause of obesity and being overweight yet Britons can attain and maintain a healthy weight and improve their overall health with the help of two easy guidelines: Consume fewer calories and make more informed food choices by opting for items with less sodium and less calories from solid fats, added sugars and refined grains. There's plenty of help and advice online including the government funded Change4Life initiative which covers healthy eating, drinking and exercise for all the family.¹⁵

Risks, benefits and ways to work it into the workplace

Sometimes, hard work can make our appetite come to life. And when the body is fed, so is the brain. Look at it this way: Having healthy food on-hand may be just the ticket to much more creativity! Here's how:

- **Bring in healthier options.** Be mindful of fat and sugar content in the food options you offer at work. Incorporate healthier eating options in your vending machines, common areas and cafeterias.
- **Fruit & Veg.** Provide healthy snack alternatives like a fruit basket or a vegetable tray. Vegetables, for instance, have a high water content, which works well to suppress appetite.
- **Packed lunch.** The office cafeteria or local sandwich shop may offer



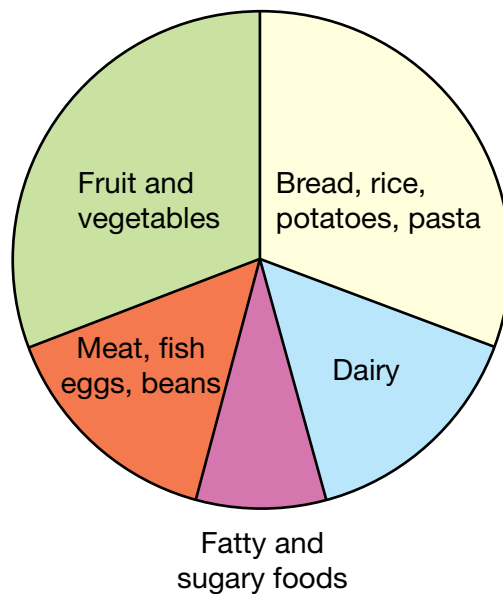
¹⁴ Jennifer Patel. "Five Trends Shaping Health and Wellness at the Workplace." *Corporate Wellness Magazine*. Web. 13 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/article/five-trends-shaping-health.html>>.
¹⁵ Change4Life. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/why-change-for-life.aspx/>>.

healthy options, but sometimes it's healthier (and more cost-effective) to make your lunch and bring it with you. Something like a chicken salad wrap with roasted vegetables, a handful of dried fruit, seeds and nuts and some pieces of fresh fruit, raw vegetables or a sugar free yogurt to snack on will keep your appetite at bay the whole day!

- **Hold a competition.** Encourage a friendly healthy eating and weight loss contest by having monthly weigh-ins and fun rewards for the most weight lost.

Trying out healthier food options and being more careful about what you eat doesn't have to make you sigh. There are loads of great-tasting low-calorie recipes out there. To help your employees along as they explore their options, have a Friday team lunch where everyone brings along a high-protein, low-fat or healthy dish they've made. It'll get your team talking about something beyond project work and deadlines and move them to keep thinking about wellness long after lunch!

- **Everything in moderation.** Aim to eat a variety of colours at each meal and avoid overindulging in any one thing. Check out the NHS's Eatwell Plate to see what each day's food intake should look like.¹⁶



- **Have quieter meals.** Turn the TV off. Sitting in front of the television, laptop or even reading a newspaper or magazine while eating can lead to eating more than your body actually needs.

¹⁶ "Your Guide to the Eatwell Plate." Gov.UK. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/237282/Eatwell_plate_booklet.pdf>.

- **Plan ahead.** Be thinking of your meals a couple of days in advance, then shop accordingly.
- **Chew gum.**¹⁷ Hungry? Keep sugar free chewing gum in the office to help hold off unruly appetite attacks.

You've heard it before: You are what you eat. Literally. Food items with trans-fat or too much sugar can wreak havoc on your body and the way it operates. Respect yourself and keep it working like a well-oiled machine by fueling it with the right food choices.

Stay hydrated: Drink water as often and as frequently as you can

There's a reason the cardinal rule of eight glasses of water a day is so essential: Your body uses its water supply to perform basic physical, mental and metabolic processes. The less water you have, the less able you are to perform basic tasks. Water is also a natural way for your body to flush out toxins. A group of French researchers even found that increasing cellular water levels promotes fat loss,¹⁸ and a group of German researchers found that the colder the water, the greater the effect on metabolic rate.¹⁹

Risks, benefits and ways to work it into the workplace

It's likely most of your team is at work 7 or 8 hours a day, five days a week – perhaps more. So as well as the more standard tea and coffee supply, make sure you have water coolers delivered, a filtration system installed that runs off the main water supply or just chilled bottled water available at all times. Good hydration is fundamental to even the most basic processes, like thinking.

- **You can never have too much water.** Have a water cooler at the ready.
- **Away with sugar.** Provide alternatives to sugary soft drinks and juices.
- **Fill up on tea.** Did you know green tea aids in weight loss? It is known to improve blood sugar regulation and increase the metabolism.²⁰ And it's a great energy-booster for a mid-afternoon crashes.



¹⁷ "How to Decrease Your Appetite." Wiki.how.com. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.wikihow.com/Decrease-Your-Appetite>>.

¹⁸ Steve Blechman and Thomas Fahey. "Lost the Bloat, Trim the Fat: 29 Best Fat-Loss Tips." FitnessRx Feb. 2011: 76-82. Print.

¹⁹ Jim Stoppioni and Kathleen Ferguson. "25 Ways to Melt Off Fat Today." Muscle & Fitness Hers Jan. 2011: 78-82. Print.

²⁰ "How to Drink Tea to Lose Weight." Wiki.How. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.wikihow.com/Drink-Tea-to-Lose-Weight>>.

Not drinking enough water can seriously hamper your body's ability to burn fat. Take for example a study by the University of Utah: Those who drank eight cups of water each day for one week burned more calories than a group who drank just four cups per day.²¹ Whether it's fat loss that is compelling you forward or a new and improved enthusiasm for wellness and staying healthy, here are a few more ideas to help you drink more water more often.

- **Drink before a meal.** Consume a large glass of water before meal times to prevent overeating. And hey, you might not be as hungry as you thought: It's easy to confuse hunger with thirst.
- **Add fresh fruit.** Just like in a restaurant: Add a slice of lemon (or lime or berries) to your water.
- **Keep it close.** Have a jug of cold water readily available in your fridge at home.

Make your commitment to drinking water visible, too. Use your management status in a small, but positive way: Showcase your commitment to wellness, even if only by carrying a water bottle or thermos of green tea into meetings and around the office. It takes commitment to inspire commitment, so take this leadership opportunity to do just that.

Get moving: Commit to physical fitness

Better eating habits are all well and good, but manifesting wellness in terms of eating alone will not produce meaningful results. Encourage your employees to add a little exercise to really get the metabolic fire burning. According to a pool of 18 studies performed by the Harvard School of Public Health, 'people lose 2.5 pounds more by combining diet with exercise, compared to dieting alone ...'²² Even more impressive were the results of one study indicating that 'successful losers' should aim to 'cut calories, exercise consistently and receive regular encouragement from professionals or support groups to maintain weight loss.'²³

Risks, benefits and ways to work it into the workplace

It's widely reported those that eat whilst watching TV consume more calories as they're distracted. Distracted eaters do not pay close attention to food and are

²¹ Jennifer Sygo. "Fat Loss Made Easy." *Oxygen* 2012: 136-37. Print.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*



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not as aware of how much they have eaten, with a review of 24 past studies

showing this could be by as much as 25 per cent.²⁴ Moreover, a comprehensive Australian study showed those in the sample that watched the most TV had a higher waist circumference and higher blood pressure.²⁵

Communicate with your team that it's okay to get up, stretch and take a quick walk when they feel their energy levels ebb. Consider these other helpful 'get moving' initiatives worth implementing at the office:

- **Provide access to a fitness centre.** Those operating on a large site may be able to allocate space for an on-site fitness facility or if this isn't possible partner with a local gym or fitness centre to make exercise a more accessible and affordable option.
- **Offer incentives.** Incentivising staff who take positive steps to adopt a healthier lifestyle could help further spread the word, offer water bottles and notebooks so staff can record their progress.
- **Get a bike rack.** For some of your employees, it might be convenient to cycle to work, so ensure there's a secure place for them to park their bikes once they get to work. You should also look to implement the government's 'Cycle to Work'²⁶ scheme which allows staff to buy a bike then pay for it in installments via payroll with a tax deduction off the cost.
- **Distribute pedometers.** Distribute pedometers to kick off a 'Get Moving' campaign. Highlight the team member with the most steps at the end of the week or month and offer a small prize or even an early release from work on a Friday afternoon!

On an individual level, aim for 30-60 minutes of moderate activity 3-5 times a week in order to see and feel results. And if you really want to cheer on your team, urge them to up the ante by exercising at high intensity and more frequently. Some additional tips to move more often in and around the office are

²⁴ "Why eating in front of the TV makes you fat: You consume 25% more LATER in the day without realising." Mail Online. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2295303/Why-eating-TV-makes-fat-You-consume-25-LATER-day-realising.html>>.

²⁵ "Television time and continuous metabolic risk in physically active adults." National Center for Biotechnology Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18317383/>>.

²⁶ "Cycle to work scheme." Gov.UK. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-to-work-scheme-implementation-guidance/>>.



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below:

- **Walk in.** Park further away to get in a leisurely walk before getting to your desk.
- **Climb up.** Instead of taking the lift use the stairs.
- **Sit pretty.** Replace your desk chair with a stability ball to engage your core muscles throughout the day.²⁷
- **Sign up for a race.** A little competition is healthy. Register for a local walking or running race, such as a 5 or 10k or even a half marathon and get some of your team to join you.

Every time you exercise, you raise your heart rate. Your heart is the most important muscle in your body and it's important to keep yours in tip-top shape. Pursue cardio activities like running and cycling to improve your heart health and encourage others to look beyond the exasperation of physical activity to see the bigger picture: A strong heart for a long, healthy life.

Conclusion

Wellness programmes are investments, but consider this: just a few years ago Johnson & Johnson developed an employee health and wellness programme for its U.S. based workforce. The cost was approximately \$400 per employee per year, but the company noted marked overall improvement within the realm of employee health and productivity levels.²⁸ Now, according to Efrem Dlugacz, Vice President of Corporate Benefits, "The rate of heart disease at Johnson & Johnson is 41% below national standards."²⁹ And hypertension: "75% below national standards."³⁰

Johnson & Johnson isn't the only global company to have experienced the many advantages of a successful corporate wellness programme. General Motors, PepsiCo and Citibank all reported substantial ROI in employee health,³¹ for example such corporations achieved a 28% reduction in sick time.³²

²⁷ Dr David Geier. "Tips to Improve Health and Wellness at Work." Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.drdauidgeier.com/tips-to-improve-health-wellness-work/>>.

²⁸ "Health and Wellness at Work." Johnson & Johnson, 207 Data. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://www.jnj.com/connect/caring/patient-stories/Health-and-Wellness-at-Work>>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Health and Wellness in the Workplace." Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://healthandwellnessintheworkplace.org/>>.

³² Ibid



If you decide to set-up a wellness programme within your workplace, make it a point to monitor employee participation and progress through evaluations and metrics, both of which will paint an accurate picture of the state of the programme. Check after the first month to see if employees are sticking to it and then again every three months to see if the change appears to be a lasting one.

There are countless physical, mental and emotional benefits that come with good health and wellness. Ultimately, encouraging and incorporating a commitment to health and wellness at work will benefit you, your team and your clients. Here's to your health!



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