

A worldwide look at well-being and wellness

There are numerous benefits to promoting a healthy, well-balanced workforce, and while your organization may have employee health and wellness programs, how about you? Have you prioritized your own well-being? Cultural differences, increases in chronic disease and lifestyle-related health problems, and other country-specific health issues often influence how we approach wellness.

Common threads bind us together. When it comes to well-being and wellness, people around the world cherish many of the same things: good health, family, financial security, and work-life balance. Pathways to these include diet and exercise, disease prevention and building resilience. Unfortunately, obstacles often get in the way.

Overcoming obstacles to good health: chronic disease and poor lifestyle choices. Chronic disease and lifestyle-related health issues are rising around the world, making prevention imperative. In the U.S., the cost of chronic disease is estimated to be more than \$1 trillion per year. In other countries like India, China, Russia, and Brazil, workers lose over 20 million productive life-years annually to chronic disease.

You've likely witnessed a trend that's on the rise everywhere around the world, including emerging nations: an increased reliance on fast food and take-out options. This is understandable as workers are tired from full work days and long commutes. However, fast food, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, workplace stress, sedentary lifestyles, and less nutritious food choices contribute to chronic disease.

Action takes many forms. The responses to chronic disease vary from country to country, based on prevalent issues and trends. Some people may be passive (content to accept the status quo) or more active (take advantage of whatever health initiatives their employers have launched). Either way, it's up to each individual to take their own initiative - from joining a gym or making healthier choices in the lunch room to accessing confidential, voluntary individual support (such as health risk assessments, wellness coaching, or motivation for change through an employee assistance program). What's right for you may be different from what's right for someone else.

Taking matters into your own hands. While your employer may have a health and wellness program in place, it's ultimately up to you to foster your well-being. Here's how to start:

- Eat nutritious meals
- Exercise regularly
- Stop smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Get plenty of sleep
- Get educated about health and wellness
- Learn more about the health issues affecting your country

This might seem like common sense, but the key to successfully managing your wellness is not only about knowing what to do, it's also about knowing how to make it happen. Perhaps you're too busy or too stressed. Maybe you set unrealistic goals the first time you went through this list of wellness changes. The key is to address and overcome the obstacles that are preventing you from doing the things listed above, all of which will ultimately lead to a healthier you.

This means identifying those obstacles and re-prioritizing. What is preventing you from eating nutritious foods or getting enough sleep? Tackle one obstacle at a time and remove it. Work your way through the list toward a healthier, fitter, happier you.

Did you know?

- Globally, obesity has nearly doubled since 1980 and is a major contributing factor to poor health and disease.
- Chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, are by far the leading cause of mortality in the world, representing 63% of all deaths.
- In the next 25 years, chronic disease could be responsible for as many as two-thirds of all deaths.
- In China, economic growth has had no positive effect on the health or healthcare of its residents.
- Approximately 60 per cent of deaths in India can be attributed to chronic disease. This number is expected to increase to 77 per cent over the next 10 years.

If you have any questions about this topic, or if you wish to discuss a personal situation you may be experiencing, we invite you to contact your EAP. Contact details can be found on your EAP brochure or you can your local operator and request to place a collect call to Canada at 905-886-3605. You will be put in touch with our Care Access Centre who will arrange for help closer to home.