

4 good reasons to work with heart

When it comes to thinking about the things that we do that affect our health – like what we eat, how physically active we are, and whether we consume tobacco – it makes sense to think about the way that our workplaces affect our behaviour.

1. Save lives. Almost half of those who die from chronic diseases, including heart disease and stroke, are in the productive period of their lives – between 15 and 69 years old. Yet many of the causes of these diseases – tobacco, unhealthy diet, or not being physically active – are factors we can control.

2. Increase personal well-being. Employees engaged in physical activity have greater enjoyment of their work, increased concentration and mental alertness, and better rapport with colleagues. Activity stimulates endorphins, nature's natural mood boosters, giving you plenty of enthusiasm for your leisure when you've finished work. Staying active while you cope with life's ups and downs relaxes the mind and body, and helps to reduce the build-up of tension.

3. Enjoy social benefits. Activities in groups, with colleagues, clubs or leisure centres, are great for meeting people outside your usual team and expanding your network of friends. Feeling healthy and developing new skills builds confidence and can help you feel more in control of your life.

4. Economic payback. A healthy workforce can contribute to the health of a business in many ways – even in times of economic slow-down. Benefits include:

- increased productivity
- reduced absenteeism rates – up to 20% fewer days lost
- lower medical costs (for both employers and employees)
- fewer workplace injuries
- a positive corporate image
- improved morale and loyalty
- enhanced staff retention.

Promoting physical activity and healthy eating, and discouraging smoking and other forms of tobacco use in and around the workplace can be simple and inexpensive.

World Heart Day

About World Heart Day

World Heart Day was created to inform people around the globe that heart disease and stroke are the world's leading cause of death, claiming 17.2 million lives each year. Together with its members, the World Heart Federation spreads the news that at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided if the main risk factors, tobacco, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, are controlled.

World Heart Day will be held on Sunday, 27 September 2009 to inspire you to "Work with Heart." Activities organized by members and partners of the World Heart Federation will include runs, public talks, concerts, sporting events and much more. Tell us about your healthy workplace at www.worldheartday.org



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About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation is committed to helping people achieve a longer and better life through prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a focus on low-and middle-income countries. It is comprised of 195 member societies of cardiology and heart foundations from over 100 countries covering the regions of Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe.



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Most of us spend over half our waking hours working. A workplace that encourages healthy habits can reduce your risk of many diseases, including heart disease and stroke – the leading cause of death worldwide.

This is why World Heart Day 2009 is calling on everyone to “Work with Heart” – encouraging you to make small changes that together could make a big difference in favour of greater health and productivity.

Many businesses have recognized the importance of employee health to achieve core business objectives and have committed to include health promotion on their corporate agenda. However, it is still mostly large corporations that offer workplace health programmes. In smaller businesses or where people are self-employed, it is the individual who has to take action.

How you can take steps towards a healthier workplace...

- Be physically active during your day. Create, or participate in an existing sport or fitness group and tell your colleagues about it.
- Walk around your building or exercise during your lunch break. Include physical activity in your working schedule and encourage others to do so too.
- Provide your colleagues with information about the benefits that they can gain from being physically active on a regular basis.
- Help others who want to be active to make their first moves.
- Insist on a smoke-free environment.
- Ask for healthy food at your work canteen, or find nearby cafes or restaurants that serve healthy meals.
- Talk with your human resources or line manager about how to establish a healthy workplace policy.



Tips for devising your own personal workplace programme...

- **Healthy food intake** – Eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Make smart choices, like choosing the “healthy menu” in your canteen or bringing your own food from home.
- **Get active and take heart** – Even 30 minutes of activity can help to prevent heart attacks and strokes and your work will benefit too. Take the stairs, go for a walk during your break, or get off the bus a couple of stops earlier and walk the rest of the way.
- **Use less salt and avoid processed foods** – Try to limit your salt intake to about a teaspoon per day. Be wary of processed foods, which often contain high levels of salt.
- **Say no to tobacco** – Your risk of coronary heart disease will be halved within a year and will return to a normal level over time.
- **Maintain a healthy weight** – Weight loss, especially together with lowered salt intake, leads to lower blood pressure. High blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke and a major factor for approximately half of all heart disease and stroke.
- **Know your numbers** – Visit a health-care professional who can measure your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, together with waist-to-hip ratio and Body Mass Index. Once you know your overall risk, you can develop a specific plan of action to improve your heart health.

Now, it's up to you to lower your risk of heart disease and stroke!