

World Heart Day

Why act now?

- 17.1 million people die every year from heart disease and stroke
- At least 80% of premature deaths are preventable through healthy diet, regular physical activity and avoiding tobacco
- Almost half of those who die from chronic diseases, including heart disease and stroke, are in the most productive period of their lives – between 15 and 69 years old
- A healthy workforce can contribute to the overall health of a business in many ways – even during an economic downturn. Benefits include:
 - Increased productivity
 - Reduced absenteeism rates – up to 20% fewer days lost
 - Lower medical costs (for both employers and employees)
 - Fewer workplace injuries
 - Improved morale and loyalty
 - Enhanced staff retention



What next?

World Heart Day is taking place on **Sunday, 26 September 2010**. Activities will include the launch of a global cardiovascular disease 10-year report card in partnership with the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum as well as a comparative survey of heart-healthy occupations. National activities organized by members and partners of the World Heart Federation may also include public talks, walks and runs, concerts, sporting events and much more.

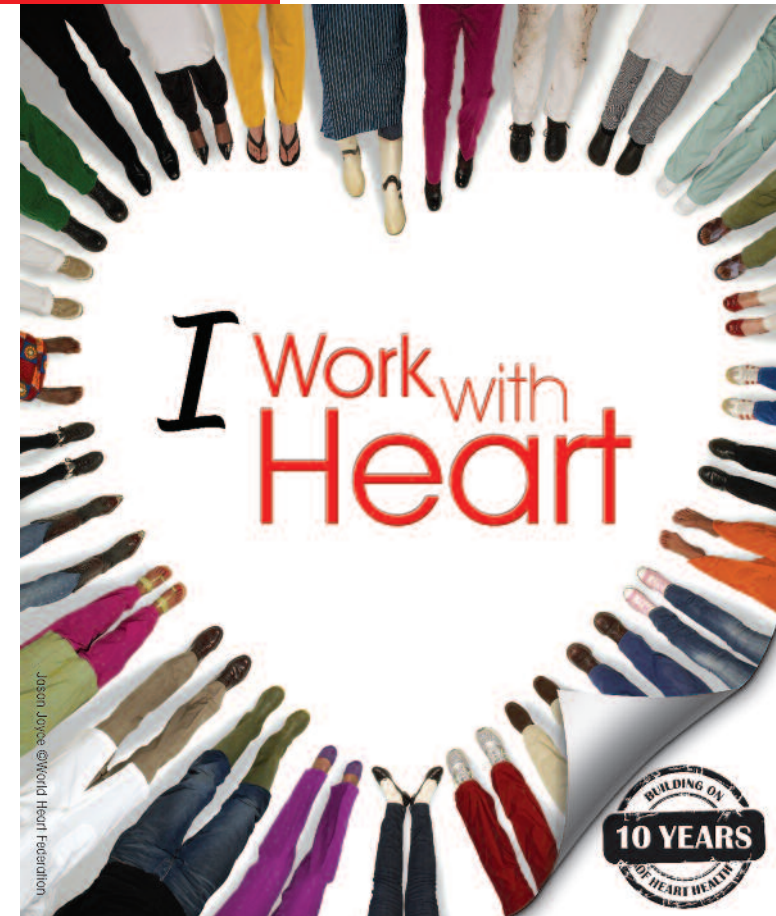
To get involved, find out more or to just tell us about your experiences working in a healthy workplace, visit: www.worldheartday.org



About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation leads the global fight against heart disease and stroke via a united community of 200 members. Through our collective efforts, we help people all over the world to lead longer, better, heart-healthy lives.

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10 years after the first World Heart Day in September 2000, the World Heart Federation and its members are celebrating the progress made in heart health.

Over the decade, we have seen medical advances and public-policy changes positively affect the lives of millions of people around the world. Yet, **heart disease and stroke still claim 17.1 million lives** every year, with an increasing burden on people living in low- and middle-income countries where 82% of deaths occur.

At this milestone, the **World Heart Federation is urging governments, healthcare professionals, employers and individuals to reduce this burden**, and ensure people all over the world have longer and better lives through the prevention and control of heart disease and stroke.

For sustained change we believe it is crucial to focus on specific goals and simple actions, which is why our efforts on World Heart Day this year are targeted around the **workplace**. Whatever your working environment, we call on you to take responsibility for your own heart health and say:

I Work with Heart

During the past decade many businesses have recognized the importance of employee health and have committed to include health promotion in their corporate agenda. However, it is not just employers who need to be motivated to change their behaviours or policies; everyone can play a role in improving health in the workplace.

Taking control of your heart health is not difficult. You can take charge of your own health, share ideas with friends, and become an advocate for workplace well-being. To help you, we have identified **10 simple steps** and on this year's World Heart Day, we ask you to start by taking one.

How you can live a healthier life:

- 1. Ensure a healthy food intake** – Eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day and avoid saturated fat. Be wary of processed foods, which often contain high levels of salt.
- 2. Get active & take control of your heart health** – Even 30 minutes of activity can help to prevent heart attacks and strokes.
- 3. 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.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Know your numbers** – Visit a healthcare professional who can measure your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, together with waist-to-hip ratio and body mass index (bmi). Once you know your overall risk, you can develop a specific plan of action to improve your heart health.
- 6. Limit your alcohol intake** – Restrict the amount of alcoholic drinks that you consume. Excessive alcohol intake can cause your blood pressure to rise and your weight to increase.



Most of us spend more than half of our waking hours at work, the workplace is the ideal setting to encourage heart-healthy behaviour. Here are some ideas on how you can contribute to making your workplace healthier:

7. Insist on a smoke-free environment

- Demand a tobacco ban – ensure your workplace is 100% smoke-free
- Support the adoption of smoking-cessation services – encourage your employer to provide help to those wanting to quit tobacco

8. Bring exercise to the workplace

- Include physical activity in your working schedule – cycle to work if this is possible, take the stairs, exercise or go for a walk during your lunch breaks, and encourage others to do so too

9. Choose healthy food options

- Ask for healthy food at your work canteen, or find nearby cafes or restaurants that serve healthy meals

10. Encourage stress-free moments

– whilst stress has not been shown to be a direct risk factor for heart disease and stroke, it is related to smoking, excessive drinking and unhealthy eating, which are risk factors for heart disease.

- Take time for lunch away from your workplace to get some fresh air
- Have regular breaks during the day – try stretching or exercising for 5 minutes twice a day

Or you could start by establishing a “wellness committee” who can devise healthy initiatives that are suitable for your workplace:

- Introduce a “walk to work” (or “bike to work”) day – encourage employers to hand out pedometers to compare number of steps amongst colleagues. Competitiveness might drive incentive to get active!
- If your workplace has lifts/elevators, create a “Take the Stairs” campaign in September – or encourage employees to go for a walk during their breaks
- Encourage your employer to provide heart-health checks and/or access to smoking-cessation services