

Background on World Heart Day

An overview of World Heart Day and an introduction to Workplace Wellness

About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation is dedicated to leading the global fight against heart disease and stroke with a focus on low- and middle-income countries via a united community of more than 200 member organizations. With its members, the World Heart Federation works to build global commitment to addressing cardiovascular health at the policy level, generates and exchanges ideas, shares best practice, advances scientific knowledge and promotes knowledge transfer to tackle cardiovascular disease –the world’s number one killer. It is a growing membership organization that brings together the strength of medical societies and heart foundations from more than 100 countries. Through our collective efforts we can help people all over the world to lead longer and better heart-healthy lives.

About World Heart Day

On **26 September 2010** – 10 years after the first World Heart Day in September 2000 – the World Heart Federation and its members are celebrating World Heart Day. At this 10-year milestone, the World Heart Federation aims to reduce the burden of heart disease and stroke by calling on everyone to take charge of their heart health.

World Heart Day was created to inform people around the globe that heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of death claiming 17.1 million¹ deaths each year. It presents a unique opportunity to mobilize people and raise awareness on the importance of heart health.

The theme for this year’s World Heart Day is “workplace wellness”. As most of us spend over half our waking hours working, the workplace is ideal to promote heart-healthy messages and raise awareness about the risk factors for heart disease and stroke. A heart-healthy workplace encourages a healthy diet, physical activity and a smoke-free environment. Research has shown that workplace-wellness programmes have benefits for both employees and employers, by improving health, productivity and reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke. This year World Heart Day will encourage everyone to take responsibility for their own heart health and say **“I work with heart”**.

A recent study by the World Economic Forum¹ analysed the effect of workplace wellness programmes and found that they can achieve a 25–30% reduction in medical and absenteeism costs. A healthy workforce can yield real benefits for businesses, increase performance and decrease healthcare costs, while increasing staff morale and personal well-being of employees.

Planned Activities

Every year, World Heart Day events are run by the World Heart Federation and its member organizations in more than 100 countries. Specifically around workplace-wellness, companies are encouraged to motivate their employees to take control of their heart health on World Heart Day and beyond – with activities ranging from organizing an office sports day to introducing healthy menus in canteens.

¹ World Health Organization. Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD) Factsheet. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs317/en/index.html>. Accessed 23 March 2010

To mark this year's 10th anniversary, the World Heart Federation is launching a special **"State of the Heart" CVD Report Card** in partnership with the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum to highlight the achievements over the past 10 years, and the efforts needed in the next 10 years to continue to combat heart disease and stroke.

At the global level, the World Heart Federation will also conduct a survey in 4–5 countries of people working in different occupations, with the aim of identifying the best and worst heart-health occupations. The results of the survey will be used to drive competitiveness between different sectors and raise awareness about the importance of heart health and workplace wellness.

How to get involved

The World Heart Federation is providing this resource guide to help in the implementation of workplace-wellness initiatives in your organization. We encourage you to get involved and commit to improving the heart health of your employees. This guide provides information on the economic arguments for workplace-wellness initiatives, workplace-wellness case studies and employee-engagement ideas for World Heart Day 2010. The guide also includes a calendar for ideas on how to engage your employees during the next 12 months.

Your business can embrace the initiative, and engage in a specific activity around World Heart Day 2010. Opportunities to show your support can include the following:

- **Local member activity:** collaborating with your local World Heart Federation Member Organization around one key employer-related activities event, or communication on workplace wellness.
- **Sponsoring World Heart Day activities:** sponsorship includes branding and association with the awareness day and your local World Heart Federation Member Organization through various channels, including local media relations, participation in local events (all local media materials branded); local website and digital communications – this can be through profiling your successes in implementing workplace wellness initiatives for your employees.
- **Signing up for the [Workplace Wellness Alliance Charter](#) - available from June onwards:** organized by the World Economic Forum, this initiative supports advancement in this area and recognizes employers that promote healthy work environments.

Contact

Further details on how to get involved are provided through the other items of this resource guide. Should you have any questions, please contact us:

Cynthia Haro
Membership & Campaigns Coordinator
World Heart Federation
7, rue des Battoirs, CP 155, CH-1211 Geneva 4
Tel: +41 22 807 0325
Fax: +41 22 807 0337
Email: cynthia.haro@worldheart.org

ⁱ World Economic Forum. Working Towards Wellness: The Business Rationale. Available at: http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Wellness/Bus_Rationale.pdf. Accessed 25 March 2010