

WALK TOWARDS WELLNESS



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Healthy employees boost a company's bottom line; they experience less sick time, take fewer disability days and suffer lesser risk of premature deaths.

It is good business for companies to help provide employees with the information and tools that will empower them to adopt healthy behaviours.

Statistically, The Canadian Return on Investment Study determined that between 1.5 to 1.7 days per employee per year of absenteeism were saved with wellness programs, which translated into an estimated savings of \$251 per employee per year.

Companies such as Canada Life, DuPont, Prudential Insurance and Citibank report a savings of \$2 to \$6.85 for each \$1 invested.

Today many insurance companies are offering percentage reductions in their group premiums for organizations that are committed to forge the world of wellness.

With over 75 years of cumulative experience providing wellness solutions to organizations across Canada we are pleased to outline three key areas of wellness that are significant factors in the well being of an employee.

Health is not tied to any one single aspect of life, but rather it is a series of lifestyle choices that involve the way we think about exercise, nutrition, and mental health.

YOUR FIRST STEP: VALUE OF HEALTH AND EXERCISE

Being active makes a person healthy and strong. It is not just for those who struggle with maintaining a healthy weight, but also for everyone who enjoys maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle.

There are many things a person can do such as jog or walk every morning, play basketball or sports with friends, but if a person wants to gain muscle and look lean, then signing up for a gym may be a great option.

The best exercise plan should have cardiovascular and weight training exercises. This helps burn calories and increase the muscle to fat ratio that will improve ones metabolism to both gain and lose weight.

Key benefits of exercising:

1. It is the easiest way to maintain and protect against disease and premature death.
2. Studies have shown that exercising can make a person feel happier. Exercise can also increase one's self-esteem preventing the onset of depression or anxiety.
3. An active lifestyle extends the life of a person.

For someone who is just beginning to work out, they should do so gradually and ease their way into a routine that is comfortable for them. Endurance will not be built in a day and doing it repeatedly will surely be beneficial to the person.

Another way to stay healthy is to give up some vices. Smoking has been proven to cause lung cancer and other diseases as well as complications for women giving birth. Excessive drinking has also been shown to do the same.

For people who don't smoke, it is best to stay away from those who do. Studies have shown that non-smokers are also at risk of developing cancer due to secondary smoke inhalation.

Exercising is only the first part to achieving wellness, the foods we intake also play an integral role in our overall health.

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Many Canadians believe they don't have enough time to exercise or eat healthy meals, the Heart and Stroke Foundation says... The foundation says that Canadians who believe there isn't enough time to live healthy are wrong. According to Statistics Canada 29 per cent of Canadians over 20 spend two hours a day or more watching television, and 15 per cent spend at least 1.5 hours a day of their leisure time on computers. - CBC news

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YOUR SECOND STEP: DEVELOP A HEALTHY EATING SHOPPING LIST

Healthy eating starts with careful planning and organization. Since fresh produce has a very limited shelf life, regular grocery shopping is a must. Creating a menu for the week and writing out a shopping list will save you time and money; while helping you stick to healthy recipes. Local health food stores and farmers markets are money-wise solutions. Frequent visits to local health food stores and farmers markets will allow you to expand your culinary horizons as well as mingle and explore ideas with other health-conscious shoppers.

So which products should you buy when trying to eat healthy? Here is what your weekly shopping list should include.

Vegetables. All vegetables should be eaten young, when they are tender and not coarse. Vegetables are best bought from fresh food markets or seasonal, when they are sold in boxes or baskets. Supermarket vegetables are often genetically modified or have been picked green and ripened in boxes when traveling long distances. Sprouts and brightly coloured vegetables contain the most vitamins and antioxidants.

Fruits. Again, the trick is to buy seasonal fruit, since exotic fruits have often traveled long distances and ripened in their boxes, not on trees. Local, naturally ripened or, better yet, organic fruit are the best choices for the health-conscious cook.

Herbs. Aromatic herbs and spices can be used fresh or dried. For best results, plant the aromatic herbs in pots and place them on your windowsill, this way they are there when you need them. To preserve flavour, you can buy spices whole and use them freshly ground.

Cheese. Although cheese is quite rich in fats, it is a great source of vitamins and minerals. Buy only fresh cheeses in small quantities and try to eat them at once, as gourmet cheeses don't have a lengthy shelf life.

Eggs. Buy only organic or free-range eggs, and shake them before buying to ensure freshness.

Fish and Shellfish. The best way to buy fish is fresh and unfrozen. Most of the fish in supermarkets comes from fish farms where it is fed with artificial substances; this fish cannot be used in healthy recipes. Pink salmon and other popular kinds of fish will most likely come from a fish farm. Shellfish is a healthy choice, since shrimp, for example, does not live in chemically polluted water. When you boil mussels, discard those that do not open.

Meat. For truly healthy eating purposes it is better to skip meat entirely, since it is almost impossible to find meat that comes from an environmentally and health conscious farmer. Most of the meat in supermarkets has enormous quantities of growth hormones and antibiotics. The best meat for use in healthy recipes comes from small farming communities or organic farms.

Grains. Whole wheat and whole grains should become a staple of your healthy eating routine, because many healthy ingredients are contained in the grain shell. Rice is the only exclusion from the rule, because, even though the rice grain shell is removed, many nutritional elements still remain.

The foods we eat become a part of us. Food can affect our mood, the way we feel, and our overall mental health state.

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‘Health is usually a means to an end,’ says Adam Glauberg, Director of Global Health Services at Johnson & Johnson. ‘The individual wants to be there for family, to get off diabetes medication, to perform better at work. If the company can tap into those personal motivations, it can better communicate the value of health.’ – Harvard Business Review

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YOUR THIRD STEP: TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Everyone has days when they are down, worn out and just not feeling all that happy.

That's OK, you need to have days like this, otherwise how would you know when you are happy? You need to have something to contrast your happiness with. What is black without white?

Even though you know that sadness is a part of life, let's try to make it a small part of life.



Mental illnesses are more likely to come up during times of stress or uncertainty, which can be part of many people's jobs. However, life stress outside of work can also affect mental health, which may then affect a person at work. – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health



With that said, here are a few simple things you can do to improve overall happiness in your everyday life. They are easy to do; easy to practice every day and they work!

1. Stand up straight, sit up straight. When your body is in alignment your energy can flow and when your energy is flowing freely, you can flow.
2. Smile! Yes, just smile. Easy to do and effective.
3. Repeat positive affirmations. Things like "I feel good", "Positive energy flows through my body", or "I see the good in all".
4. Listen to some music that you like. It doesn't have to be anything specific, just something you enjoy. Certain types of music work better than others, but experiment and see what works for you. Studies have shown that classical and new age music work best.
5. Take some time out for yourself, relax and read a book, do something for yourself.
6. Meditate. Meditation is an excellent habit to develop. It will serve you in all that you do. If you are one who has a hard time sitting still, then try some special meditation CDs that coax your brain into the meditative state.

Practice these tips everyday and make them a habit. You will be surprised at how these simple exercises keep the rainy days away.

Wellness in both the workplace and personal life should not be overlooked. Keeping these areas in mind and working to improve overall health everyday will ensure an energized, happy and positive lifestyle. Begin your walk towards wellness today!

Thank you for reading *Walk Towards Wellness*. If you are interested in learning more about Aspiria or how we can create a wellness program for your organization, please contact us at 1-877-ASPIRIA (277-4742).

Feel free to follow our company blog (<https://charlesbenayon.wordpress.com/>) for more wellness insights.

