



Wellness Meeting

Meeting Objectives

To define wellness and explain its key components and the individual's power to control them. The result should be increased attention to diet, exercise, and eliminating bad habits that affect health and personal well-being.

Suggested Materials to Have on Hand

(Note: You may want to ask your company's human resources or medical department, the local health department, or your company's insurer if they have posters, pamphlets, or other materials on wellness topics.)

Introduction/Overview

Wellness is a term that has been created to cover the things you do to stay healthy. It means not being sick, but it's more than that. It's really a way of living that says you care about your health and about yourself.

Keep in mind that being healthy does a lot more for you than avoid doctor bills. It makes you feel and look better, gives you more energy, and helps you to get more enjoyment out of life now and in the future.

This is not a commercial for high-fiber breakfast cereals or for joining an exercise program. It's an attempt to help you recognize what you do—and don't do—that might be bad for your health.

Wellness is a series of decisions, replacing bad habits with good ones. It's something you do by yourself, for yourself.

General Hazards

We talk a lot about health hazards and people that don't practice wellness risk a lot of them.

Among the more common: heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, certain cancers, respiratory diseases. There are also other hazards that may lead to the more life-threatening ones: being overweight, exhaustion, shortness of breath, tension, dependence on unhealthy substances.

Identifying Hazards

The hazards to your health that you get from lack of wellness fall into several categories:

- Food. Eating too much is a hazard. Being overweight can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, back problems, diabetes, and other serious problems. And eating too much junk food, too much fat, and too much salty food are all hazards to your health. You also put your health at risk if you fail to eat a balanced diet with the full range of vitamins, minerals, and fiber you need.
- Drink. Alcohol is a major health hazard. While most people can drink occasionally, some can't afford to drink at all. Too much alcohol, whether or not you're an alcoholic, can affect your physical and mental abilities, damage your liver and other organs, and shorten your life.
- Another drink you have to watch out for is caffeine, in coffee and tea and in many soft drinks. Too much can make you jumpy, irritable, and unable to sleep. It may also be tied to long-term health problems.
- Drugs. Whether they're prescription or illegal, dependence on drugs can have a bad effect on almost all your physical and mental functions. It's too big a topic to cover in this meeting, but it's true that all use of illegal drugs is hazardous and overuse of prescription drugs can be hazardous.
- Smoking. Smoking can cause cancer, heart disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis and other breathing



problems. It's a major health hazard with no plus side.

- **Stress.** Everybody's life has some stress or tension—at work, at home, in traffic, and every time we encounter change. But too much stress is a real health hazard. You feel you can't handle it. Or you try to ignore stress and hold your feelings in. Stress can cause headaches, backaches, ulcers, sleeplessness, high blood pressure, and heart disease.
- **Exercise.** You need some kind of exercise to strengthen your heart, muscles, and bones. Without it, you lack energy and stamina and your body is more likely to give out on you earlier. Exercise can help fight those health hazards and is an important part of fighting the other problems that have a negative effect on wellness.

Each of these areas is an overall hazard. Depending on your personal habits and even your heredity, not everyone will be an equal problem to each of you. But we can all probably make improvements in every area. And they're improvements you can make yourself.

Protection against Hazards

You protect yourself against the hazards to your health by practicing wellness. Let's see what that means:

- **Food:** Eat the right foods in the right amounts. You need a balanced diet that includes fruits and vegetables (especially fresh ones), whole-grain breads and cereals, poultry, fish, and lean meats. What you don't need are candy, cakes, and salty snack foods. And limit the amounts of fatty meats, eggs, butter, cheese, and cream in your diet.
- **Try to reach a healthy weight.** Be honest with yourself. Your mirror, your belt, or your spouse or close friend will probably tell you if you should lose weight. Talk with your doctor about what you should weigh and how to get there.
- **Drink:** Water is best, alcohol and caffeine worst. Water is the best thing you can drink. It fills you up and helps you digest. It's even supposed to be good for your skin.
- **Alcohol,** on the other hand, can be a problem. For most people, a social drink is okay. But wanting, much less needing, a drink indicates that you have a problem. If you even suspect you might have a problem, get help. AA is as close as your phone product.
- **Caffeine** is also all right in moderation. But keep it to an occasional cup of coffee or tea or an occasional soft drink. Any more can be a health hazard in the making.
- **Drugs:** Just say "no" to illegal drugs and take legal drugs only to the degree your doctor says you really need them. Drugs prescribed by your doctor can help with a health problem. But if you're taking drugs just to relax or cope, you need to look for a better way. Illegal drugs are always a mistake. Protect yourself against these serious health and physical hazards by not doing them at all. If you are doing them, get the help you need to stop.
- **Smoking:** Kick the habit. Smoking is an addiction, but millions of people have beaten it. If you can't quit on your own, find a program to help. And if you've tried and failed, try again.
- **Exercise:** Get fit. You don't have to be an athlete to get exercise. You can run, walk, play basketball or tennis, and join an exercise or weight-lifting program. You can also climb stairs or chop firewood. There's some form of exercise for everyone. Exercise is a key part of wellness, and one of the best ways to protect yourself against all kinds of health hazards. It's also not something that you should plunge into if you're out of shape. Consult your doctor and consider getting started in a supervised program.

Safety Procedures

As you get into wellness and start shifting from bad habits to good ones, here are a number of tips that might help:



Food

- Eat smaller portions.
- Eat raw fruits and vegetables, not junk food, for snacks.
- Eat early in the day so you have time to burn it off.
- Don't eat before going to bed.
- Don't eat because you're upset or as a reward.
- Don't salt your food before you taste it.

Drink

- Learn your limits with alcohol—and stick to them.
- Don't make drinking alcohol part of your normal routine.
- Switch to decaffeinated drinks—or even better, to water.

Drugs

- Don't use illegal drugs. Period.
- Don't abuse prescription drugs.

Smoking

- Change the habits that make you want to smoke:
 - Keep your cigarettes in an inconvenient place.
 - Put away your ashtrays.
 - Spend time in places that prohibit smoking.
 - Take up hobbies like wood carving that keep your hands busy.
 - Take a walk, instead of lighting a cigarette, after meals.
 - Put off the next cigarette as long as you can.

Exercise

- Consult a doctor before starting regular exercise.
- Try to find a type of exercise you'll enjoy.
- Start a regular exercise program slowly, building up your time and effort.
- Don't feel you need "pain" to get "gain" from exercising.
- Warm up before exercising.
- Whenever possible, walk instead of drive. Take stairs instead of elevators. Park at the far end of the parking lot, not next to the door.
- Do work around the house.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- What do we mean by wellness?
- What are some of the hazards that lack of wellness poses?
- What are some of the eating habits that promote wellness?
- What are some hazardous eating habits?
- How do drinking and drugs fit the topic of wellness?
- What are some of the ways to cut down on smoking if you can't quit yet?
- Why is caffeine a potential hazard?
- What wellness benefits do you get from exercise?
- What are some types of exercise you can incorporate into your day, here and at home?
- Are there any other questions?



Wrap-Up

Wellness takes in a lot of aspects of life, but they're all things that you can control. Your eating, drinking, smoking, drug use, and exercise habits are all yours to keep or to change. These are the things that can make you sick, make you tired, and shorten your life.

Or, to turn it around, these are the things that can make you feel more energetic, look better, feel healthier, and live longer.

There aren't any OSHA rules or company rules on most of these things. They're really things that you have to want to do yourself, for yourself.

What makes it even easier is that you don't have to do everything. Just give it a try. Eat less, and switch from junky snacks to healthy ones. Drink water instead of other beverages (it's cheaper, too). Take a walk after lunch instead of having a cigarette. The little changes don't take much, but they can help you feel better and actually be better. And that's what wellness is all about.



Sample Handout

Wellness Do's and Don'ts Checklist

DO:

- Be honest with yourself about your habits.
- Find out from your doctor if you should lose weight—and how much and how to do it.
- Consult a doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Reduce food portions.
- Eat a balanced diet: raw fruits and vegetables, lean meats, poultry, seafood, whole-grain breads and cereals.
- Learn—and stick to—your limits when drinking alcohol.
- Eat early in the day, not before going to bed.
- Drink water or decaffeinated drinks rather than coffee, tea, or caffeinated soft drinks.
- Avoid stressful situations.
- Exercise regularly—hopefully in ways you enjoy.
- Look for ways to reduce, if not yet eliminate, smoking: making cigarettes and ashtrays inconvenient, spending more time in nonsmoking areas, putting off the next cigarette, finding things to do with your hands.
- Start slowly on exercise programs, building up over time.
- Walk more: upstairs, across parking lots, around your yard.

DON'T:

- Eat fatty, sugary, salty foods and snacks.
- Use food as a reward or a means of coping with upsets.
- Drink alcohol because you "want" or "need" it.
- Use illegal drugs.
- Overdo prescription drugs.
- Smoke cigarettes, cigars, or pipes.
- Salt your food before you taste it.
- Overdo on exercising.

