

101 Ways to Wellness For Employees

Kids Can Do it!



The Wellness Councils of America is dedicated to helping the nation's employees lead healthier lives. The tips and strategies outlined in 101 Ways to Wellness are offered as a means to assist you in creating a healthier workplace. And now that Americans are working more and more, the workplace may be the ideal place to address health and wellness.

The tips and strategies included here are by no means a comprehensive list, and are designed to initiate action and ideas to help build and sustain a wellness program that makes a difference in the lives of your employees and their families. At WELCOA, we believe wellness means living life wisely—a most noble pursuit. It is our sincere hope that the tips and strategies included here will help your employees get on a path that leads to high-level wellness. These tips focus on nutrition and weight management, stress, family, safety, and financial wellness. There are also a variety of general ideas to help improve employee health and well-being.

“Linking health promotion objectives to business outcomes.”

The Wellness Councils of America is one of North America's most trusted voices for workplace wellness information. For over a decade, we have been partnering with our clients—businesses, health care systems, government agencies, educational institutions, and not-for-profit organizations—to help them build world-class wellness programs. With a growing membership of over 3,000 organizations, collectively employing millions of people, WELCOA has become one of the largest and most respected resources for workplace wellness in North America.

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Contents

**Nutrition &
Weight Management**

Stress Management

Family / Safety

Financial Wellness

Programming

Program Promotion

Grab Bag

Nutrition & Weight Management

- 1. Encourage employees to eat breakfast.** Eating breakfast can raise metabolism by as much as 10%.¹ Eating breakfast can give your employees' metabolism a jumpstart, giving them the energy needed to perform at their best in an often demanding workday.
- 2. Promote a healthy diet.** According to a recent Gallup poll, 54% of Americans admitted to weighing more than they should.² It's no secret, eating healthy these days is getting more and more difficult—and the rub is that employees know their eating habits are getting worse. How's your company cafeteria?
- 3. Recommend physical activity.** Overweight and physical inactivity account for 300,000 premature deaths annually—second only to tobacco related deaths.³ There are a number of fun activities you can do to help promote physical activity in your workplace. Try initiating a stair climbing challenge in which employees use the stairs rather than taking elevators. This exercise can be especially effective if your office is located in a skyscraper!
- 4. Post BMI charts.** Overall, the direct costs of obesity and physical inactivity account for approximately 9.4% of the national health care expenditures in the U.S.⁴ Posting BMI charts can be a great way to initiate conversation on weight management with your employees. Weight management programs can help your employees live longer and healthier lives, and can save your organization serious money.
- 5. Make sure drinking water is available to your employees.** With more than 2 million soft drink vending machines in America⁵ it's no surprise that Americans consume 54.5 gallons of soft drinks annually.⁶ Providing an alternative to the soda pop machine is a great way to help employees reduce those extra calories from their diets.
- 6. Identify healthy eateries in close proximity to your workplace.** More than 54 billion meals were eaten in restaurants and school and work cafeterias in 2001⁷—most of which aren't even remotely healthy. Compile menus from local eateries and identify healthy items for employees to choose from. Talk about creativity, fortune 500 giant Union Pacific Railroad partnered with local restaurants to incorporate healthier food items on their menus—and UP employees took advantage.
- 7. Warn employees about fad dieting.** Americans spend \$33 billion annually for weight loss products and services that offer quick fixes.⁸ Help employees identify those fraudulent diets by providing information or sponsoring a speaker who can address this issue. Some warning signs of fad diets include those that restrict food choices to one or two items, or ones that offer ridiculous results like, “lose 10 pounds over the weekend.” For other tips on recognizing fad diets, check out the American Heart Association's website at www.AmericanHeart.org/Health/Risk_Factors/Overweight/Fad_Diets.
- 8. Inform employees of the high fat lunch.** In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. The typical American now consumes three hamburgers and four orders of fries—every week!⁹ Suggest menus with healthy, yet tasty menu items. Less fat at lunch may also curb employees' temptation to take that afternoon “desk nap.”
- 9. Suggest a multi-vitamin.** A recent study has suggested that vitamin C may help the body deal with stress more effectively.¹⁰ Adding a multi-vitamin to your diet may also help employees receive the necessary vitamins and minerals needed to keep their bodies running well.
- 10. Provide cholesterol screenings.** Nineteen percent of Americans ages 20 to 74 have high cholesterol levels.¹¹ According to Healthy People 2010, young adults should be checked every five years, while older adults—men over 45 and women over 55—should measure their cholesterol at least once a year. Providing this service for your employees can go a long way in preventing a number of serious medical complications.
- 11. Discuss proper calcium intake with employees.** Depending on your age, appropriate calcium intake falls between 1,000 and 1,300 mg per day.¹² Additionally, weight training exercise has been shown to help prevent osteoporosis. If you suggest weight training to your employees, make sure they have access to a safety manual on proper weight training techniques, as well as information on proper dietary considerations.
- 12. Post nutritional information on your vending machines.** 55% of people who make purchases from vending machines purchase those items at their place of work.¹³ Of those purchases, 72.8% of those purchases were candy bars, salty snacks/chips, and pastries.¹⁴ Educating employees on nutrition by posting information on fat and calories right on the front of the vending machine may help them choose healthier snacks throughout the day. It may even help them eliminate bad snack choices altogether.



13. Educate employees on recommended fruit and vegetable intake. Diseases associated with dietary imbalance rank among the leading causes of illness and death in the U.S.¹⁵ The FDA recommends two to four servings of fruit per day and three to five servings of vegetables daily,¹⁶ but only 13% of adults eat the minimum amount of fruit and vegetables needed.¹⁷ Keeping a food log may make it easier get the recommended servings into your diet.

Stress Management

14. Deliver a PowerPoint presentation on time management. The average person gets one interruption every eight minutes, or approximately seven an hour, or 50 to 60 per day. The average interruption takes five minutes, totaling about four hours, or 50% of the average workday. Eighty percent of those interruptions are typically rated as “little value” or “no value” creating approximately three hours of wasted time per day!¹⁸ How productive is your workforce? Create a presentation that centers on simple things employees can do at work or home to more effectively use time. Points to cover should include developing a successful routine, prioritization, and saying no.

15. Be family friendly. Weekly leisure time activity in 1973 was estimated to total 26.2 hours. Today leisure time activity has dropped to only 19.5 hours per week.¹⁹ If your organization doesn’t already offer flextime, part time, or job-sharing options, talk to senior management to see what can be worked out. Some very progressive companies offer a variety of options for structuring working hours, and find that employees love the benefit because it allows for more family time. Check out the Families and Work Institute’s web page at www.familiesandwork.org.

16. Provide information for depressed workers. Nearly 10 million American adults are seriously depressed.²⁰ But the situation is not hopeless. In fact, 80 to 90 % of people who receive treatment for serious depression can be effectively treated and return to normal daily life.⁴⁴ Provide resources on treatment facilities in your area— depressed employees may not ask for this information themselves.

17. Host a massage-a-thon. Only 6% of employers offer massage, but when it is provided, 60% of employees relax with a massage.²¹ Massage is becoming an increasingly popular way for people to relieve stress and recharge for another day of work. Try sponsoring a monthly massage for your employees over lunch times or throughout a workday. Stress reduction can go a long way toward increased productivity and employee morale.

18. Make time for leisure. In just the last 20 years, we have added 158 hours to our annual working and commuting time—the equivalent of a full month of working hours.²² Designate a quiet room in your company as the “green room.” This room could be used as an out-of-the-way employee retreat to help workers recharge and stay motivated throughout the day.

19. Help employees make their vacations, vacations. 12.7% of travelers will become the victim of a crime sometime during their vacations.²³ Many times, proper vacation planning can go a long way in preventing these crimes. Try hosting a brown bag lunch discussing tips and strategies for proper vacation planning.

20. Invite a relationship expert to speak to employees. There will be two million marriages in this country this year and one million divorces—the average working person spends less than two minutes per day in meaningful communication with their spouse or “significant other”²⁴—any connection? Because 95% of divorces are caused by a “lack of communication,”³⁰ helping employees with their relationships and communication skills can help make their lives much more enjoyable.

21. Improve your employees’ memories. The average person retains 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, and 30% of what they see.³⁰ Because of today’s speed of life, it often is hard for employees to keep their memories sharp—which can easily affect the bottom line. Check out the book, *Power Sleep*, by Dr. James B. Maas for some interesting tips on how you can improve your employees’ memories in fun ways.

22. Host a conflict resolution course or brown bag. Nearly 1,000 workers are murdered, and 1.5 million are assaulted in the workplace each year.²⁵ Providing an informational meeting on conflict resolution and stress management can keep your workplace out of the news. Check out OSHA for great information you can relay to your workforce.

- 23. Provide your employees with information on day care services.** According to one study, 25% of employees feel stressed or nervous in their working environment, and 13% have difficulty coping with the demands of everyday life within the past three months.²⁶ Making parenting easier is a great way to provide a real benefit to your employees. It may not be possible for every organization, but how about starting a daycare at the worksite?
- 24. Provide continued education opportunities for your employees.** By taking one hour per day for independent study, seven hours per week, 365 hours in a year, one can learn at the rate of a full time student. In three to five years, the average person can become an expert on the topic of their choice.²⁷ Regardless of your company's industry, the body of knowledge within that industry is constantly being built and rebuilt. Help your employees become more productive and interested in their careers by offering continued education. This education can be specific to skills important to your industry, or could simply cover areas of interest to your employees.
- 25. Allow enough time for major policy changes.** The average employee needs six to nine months to effectively prepare for and accept worksite policy changes.²⁸ Make sure you give your employees enough lead-time to prepare for major policy changes— such as going smoke free. Allowing plenty of time can make the process more effective for everyone.
- 26. Partner with department heads.** Approximately 17 million business meetings take place everyday.²⁹ That means that at least 34 million people are putting their heads together to solve problems and make business functions more effective. Get your wellness team together often, and invite others to offer input every now and then. Partnering with others and making them part of your wellness team, will inspire creativity and ensure program reach.
- 27. Pick up the phone.** Relationships that foster a sense of belonging seem to play a vital role in maintaining health or surviving serious illness.³⁰ Adding a personal touch to your wellness program by regularly phoning employees to chat is a great way to keep your employees healthy. It may even make your employees feel more comfortable about opening up to you and eventually upping their involvement with the wellness program. Make the commitment to phone ten employees a week.



Family / Safety

- 28. Hold a bicycle rodeo.** Bicycling injuries accounted for about 550,000 emergency room visits and 1,000 deaths annually between 1984 and 1988.³¹ With proper safety equipment, many of these visits and deaths could have been prevented. A bicycle rodeo is a great way to promote bicycle safety and serves as great family bonding time as well. Often local schools hold bicycle rodeos. Your organization may be able to help out.
- 29. Promote swimming pool safety.** 40 to 90% of drownings of small children occurred in swimming pools, usually located in their own back yards. In two thirds of these cases, these children are being supervised by one or both of their parents.³² Swimming is a great summer recreational activity, but can lead to disastrous consequences if precautions are not taken. Make information regarding swimming lessons and pool safety available to your employees.
- 30. Talk about fire safety.** Fires and burns are the second leading cause of unintentional injury and are responsible for 75 to 95% of deaths in residential fires.³³ Negotiate discounts with local vendors for smoke detectors. Smoke detectors are the most effective tool in preventing death in residential fires.
- 31. Provide your employees with proper personal protection equipment.** A total of 5.7 million workplace injuries and illnesses were reported in 1999.³⁴ And, while workers compensation costs can contribute to an enormous amount of health care costs for an organization, providing personal protective equipment can help reduce this cost. Check out OSHA for the latest personal protective equipment and trends.
- 32. Drive wellness through your organization.** Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death in children and young adults, and the leading cause of years of life lost before age 65.³⁵ Provide information on defensive driving courses offered in your area. These classes can be very effective in improving driver skill, especially those with less driving experience—not to mention these classes often help reduce automotive insurance premiums.

- **33. Prevent family violence.** Approximately one-fourth of all emergency room visits by women are the result of domestic assault.³⁶ Look for warning signs from employees who may be being abused. These signs may include feelings of shame or embarrassment. Untreated regular injuries are also a major indicator of domestic abuse.
- **34. Implement a mandatory stretching policy.** Believe it or not, low back pain affects 60 to 80% of adults sometime in their lives. What's more, back pain symptoms are among the 10 leading reason for visits to emergency rooms, outpatient departments, and physician's offices.³⁷ Stretching and exercise can reduce the risk of these problems and create a great warm up before diving into a stressful workday.
- **35. Initiate a "Sun Safety" Campaign.** The average American enjoys about 130 leisure days every year³⁸—many of which are in the sun. May is skin cancer awareness month, and should be a great time to start your initiative.
- **36. Drinking responsibly.** Many problem drinkers have medical or social problems attributable to alcohol without typical signs of dependence.³⁹ And while drinking and driving may be the most talked about issue surrounding problem drinking, it isn't the only one. Make sure your employees know some of the warning signs of the health conditions that can be caused by problem drinking.
- **37. Help employees keep their children safe.** Between 1992 and June 1994, 105 violent deaths occurred on or near school grounds or at school associated events.⁴⁰ As a wellness practitioner, you can help your employees keep their children safe by providing information such as hotline numbers for youth violence or helpful strategies for their children in case incidents break out in their schools.
- **38. Keep employees in the know.** In a Kaiser Permanente Study, 42% of survey respondents reported using the Internet to find health information.⁴¹ Do you know how much of it was accurate? Help your employees find the most accurate health information available. A great place for this information is www.kp.org/hicheckup. With a barrage of inaccurate health information on the Internet, it is imperative that people receive sound medical advice.
- **39. Provide safe walking gear.** On average, a pedestrian is killed in a traffic crash every 99 minutes.⁴² These deaths are totally preventable. For companies that sponsor walking programs for their employees—especially on the second and third shifts—it's important to provide bright colored or reflective clothing to protect them from being hit by vehicles.
- **40. Help parents educate their children about alcohol.** The total amount of alcohol consumed by college students each year is 430 million gallons, enough for every college and university in the United States to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.⁴³ Many parents often have the "not my kid" syndrome. Help them to understand the risks their college-aged students are faced with so they can keep their children safe.
- **41. Create a checklist for safe travel.** In 1999, Almost 700 million Americans went on pleasure trips, and of those 700 million, 77% traveled by car.⁴⁴ Include in your checklist such topics as roadside emergency safety, where to find an affordable first aid kit for your car, important items to bring along, and safe driving tips. Reliable travel information is available at www.aaa.com.
- **42. Help your employees recreate safely.** In 1992, in the U.S., injuries accounted for 2.7 million hospitalizations, 34 million emergency department visits, and 63 million visits to office-based physicians and hospital outpatient departments⁴⁵—all of which can affect an organization's bottom line. Holding a recreational event is a great way to disseminate information on preventive measures for your employees, especially those who are parents.
- **43. Increase fire awareness.** Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and injuries from fires in the United States.⁴⁶ Make sure a fire safety brochure is available in your company's break room that employees can pick up and take home. Hosting a fire safety week may not be a bad idea either.
- **44. Help employees make their homes safe.** In 1998, more than two million American households were burglarized and more than one million cars were stolen.⁴⁷ Distribute tip sheets to your employees on avoiding home and vehicle theft. This can be an especially helpful tool for employees during the holiday season when home and car theft may become more common.
- **45. Hold a seat belt campaign.** In 1994, if every front seat occupant had buckled up, an additional 9,500 deaths and about 200,000 injuries could have been prevented—for an economic savings of \$20 billion.⁴⁸ Promoting seatbelt safety is one of the most important things you can do to protect the health and well-being of your employees.

- 46. Post drinking and driving information in your building.** In 1997, 1.4 million people were arrested in the U.S. for driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated.⁴⁹ Imagine how many lost workdays are involved in that number. Provide information on enjoyable non-drinking activities that can help your employees enjoy a night out on the town—SAFELY.
- 47. Don't forget food safety.** According to the CDC, foodborne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses in the United States each year.⁵⁰ Foodborne disease can result in terrible discomfort and lost workplace productivity. If necessary, implement a policy requiring that food left in the break room fridge for two or more days must be thrown out.
- 48. Pay attention to organizational noise levels.** OSHA recommends that noise levels not exceed 90 decibels in an 8-hour shift.⁵¹ If your organization is manufacturing-based, there is a good chance the working environment is noisy. Make sure that earplugs are available for employee use free of charge—and make sure they're wearing them.
- 49. Encourage firearms safety courses.** A 2000 poll done by The Gallup Organization found that 42% of Americans had a firearm in their home.⁵² Proper firearms knowledge and responsibility will go a long way in preventing unintentional accidents. Bite the bullet, and raise this issue at your workplace.
- 50. Hold a class on parenting.** In 1940, only 10% of children under 18 were living with an employed mother. In 1995, that figure had climbed to 68%.⁵³ Raising kids is tough business. Try holding a parenting class once a quarter free of charge. Younger parents may find this service especially helpful, and a less rocky home life may even help increase employee productivity. Check out the American Academy of Pediatrics for some practical parenting tips that can help you and the employee parents in your organization move in the right direction.
- 51. Make warning signs well known.** In the United States, one out of four deaths is due to cancer.⁵⁴ Help your employees prevent this disease, as well as others, by making a list of the warning signs of different common health problems. You can stuff these into paycheck envelopes to ensure they get noticed. Be patient, sometimes it takes a while to get the message across.
- 52. Keep your employees alert!** In the PBS television documentary *Sleep Alert*, a Boeing 747 captain noted, "It is not unusual for me to fall asleep in the cockpit and wake up 20 minutes later and find the other two crew members totally asleep."⁵⁵ While it's not likely that your institution will adopt a "nap time," there are a number of things you can do to keep your employees alert. Check out Alertness Solution's web page at www.alertness-solutions.com for some guidance.
- 53. Teach proper hand washing techniques.** More than 90% of adults say they wash their hands after using public restrooms, however just six in 10 were observed doing so.⁵⁶ Post signs detailing proper hand washing techniques in the bathrooms at your organization. Proper hand washing can go a long way in preventing employee down time.
- 54. Provide information on elder care services.** Over the next 20 years, a person will turn 50 approximately every eight seconds.⁵⁷ This means that by the year 2020, people over the age of 50 will constitute 36% of America's population.³³ As America's population ages, make sure that your older employees are ahead of the curve. A great resource for information is the American Association of Retired People at www.aarp.org.



Financial Wellness

- 55. Sponsor financial planning seminars.** Only 39% of Baby Boomers have given "a great deal" of thought to their retirement and 15% haven't given retirement much thought at all.⁵⁸ Helping your employees get ahead in their financial life can improve their overall health and well-being.
- 56. Invite a financial planner into your organization to speak to employees.** Investing \$2,000 a year for 30 years with an 8% return on your money will yield a sum of \$244,692 in tax deferred savings, assuming you're in the 28% tax bracket.⁵⁹ Younger employees could become financially healthy with this information, and older employees may appreciate alternate strategies for retirement preparation.
- 57. Provide estate planning information to employees.** Two out of three Americans die without making a will.⁶⁰ If this happens, state laws decide how the estate is divided. Financial planners and attorneys can help employees avoid this unpleasantness. Have one in over the lunch hour to educate your employees on "will basics." It's easier than you may think.

- 58. **Sponsor a speaker to talk about budgeting.** 44% of Americans anticipate that their financial situation will worsen in the next 12 months.⁶¹ Simple tips on budgeting can alleviate this worry.
- 59. **Answer audit questions.** According to the Wall Street Journal Guide to Understanding Personal Finance, employees' chances of being audited sometime in their lifetime are close to 50%— especially if they make more than \$50,000 a year.⁶² Providing a simple brochure defining what an audit entails, and crafting a taxpayer “bill of rights” can make employees feel more secure.
- 60. **Help employees decipher their credit reports.** Collecting and reporting credit histories is a 1 billion dollar industry that maintains records on 180 million people and supports about 800 local and regional offices.⁶³ And in 1999, the national consumer debt reached an all time high of over \$1 trillion.⁶⁴ Assist employees by sponsoring a class on making sense of their credit reports. Mistakes happen every day—make sure they don't happen with employees' money.
- 61. **Use payday to get your point across.** It's recommended that you invest between 5 and 10% of your gross income regularly ⁶⁵— preferably each time you get paid. Try e-mailing little messages like this every payday.
- 62. **Assist employees in balancing marriage and money.** Thirty-two percent of Americans worry about not having enough money to pay their monthly bills.⁶⁶ Add this to the weight of daily marital stress, and balancing marriage and family fast becomes a challenging issue. Offering anger control, money management, and stress reduction courses can go a long way in keeping employee marriages healthy and family bank accounts in the black.
- 63. **Provide ATM safety tips.** Considering that 12 billion ATM transactions take place every year,⁶⁷ it's no surprise that these modern conveniences are hot spots for crimes. Some simple safety precautions can help to keep your employees safe. If you're looking for suggestions, go to www.crimesolvers.com/atm.html.
- 64. **Inform employees about store gimmicks.** Americans spent \$715 billion on food in 1997.⁶⁸ That translates into huge profits for grocery stores, and that's no accident. Almost every store, no matter what the industry type, has creative systems in place to prompt you to purchase more than you actually need. These “gimmicks” can be avoided if your employees know what to look for.
- 65. **Educate employees about interest.** The average balance on a credit card is \$7,000, and the typical American household has 10 credit cards. Add to this the fact that monthly credit card payments are about 90% interest and about 10% principal,⁶¹ and you have a real mess. Help employees sort out this financial dilemma by making information about high interest rates available. If they know the dangers, they may be more apt to search out better deals.
- 66. **Talk about saving money.** According to a recent Gallup survey almost half of employed Americans say they couldn't last more than a month without experiencing significant financial difficulties if they were laid off. Only one out of 10 could last more than a year.⁵⁸ Make it your mission to inform your employees about importance of saving money. Did you know financial experts recommend that you have six months wages in savings before you even start to invest elsewhere?
- 67. **Make sure employees know how to shop for an automobile.** The average ticket price of an automobile repair is \$318.⁶⁹ Help employees choose the most reliable automobile by making credible resources available like a Kelly Blue Book or by passing on reliable automotive centered websites.
- 68. **Discover surefire ways to live debt free.** A recent Gallup poll revealed that less than half of credit card holders always pay off their monthly balance.⁷⁰ With these kinds of statistics, the American workforce is sure to rack up serious debt—and quickly. Learn all you can about credit and credit cards and make sure to pass the information on to employees.

Programming

- 69. **Recommend mammography.** In the U.S. in 1995, there were an estimated 182,000 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed and 46,000 deaths from this disease in women.⁷¹ There is little doubt that breast cancer screening by mammography has a significant potential to reducing mortality for this serious disease. Screening for breast cancer every two years with mammography alone, or mammography and annual clinical breast examinations is recommended for women age 50 to 69.

- 70. Remember important dates.** Have a hard time remembering dates? Don't worry, you aren't alone. Birthdays, anniversaries, and Father's Day rank as some of the most forgotten gift-giving occasions among business travelers.⁷² Make it a point to record the dates that your employees have made significant life changes like quitting smoking, losing 20 pounds, or starting a walking program. By celebrating these significant life changes—routinely—you greatly increase the likelihood that employees maintain healthy behaviors.
- 71. Screen for hearing loss.** Noise is a common cause of hearing impairment in employees between adolescence and 50 years of age—this is particularly true for the estimated five million Americans with occupational exposure to hazardous noise levels.⁷³ According to the Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, periodic screening can help to prevent early hearing loss.
- 72. Read, Read, Read.** Less than half of the U.S. population reads more than 10 books per year.⁷⁴ And, if you're a wellness practitioner that falls in this category, you might be in trouble when it comes to keeping the creative juices flowing. Make it a point to get your nose in the literature! It's guaranteed to keep you stimulated, and your employees healthy.
- 73. Make information about STDs available.** The precise incidence of STD's is not known, but it is estimated that 12 million people contract an STD each year.⁷⁵ OK, let's face it. This isn't an easy or fun wellness topic to discuss; however, it is an important one. Employers can play a key role in addressing and improving these statistics—advising your employees about the risk factors of STDs is a great stride toward this end.
- 74. Offer family planning information.** In a national survey of over 8,000 women ages 15 to 44, 57% of all pregnancies were mistimed or unintended.⁷⁵ Offering family planning information is a great way to help your employees prevent an unintended maternity leave.
- 75. Consider making big changes.** According to renowned cardiologist, Dr. Dean Ornish, it is often easier for individuals to make sweeping behavioral changes all at the same time. Although this information does seem contrary to those professionals that advocate "baby steps," Dr. Ornish counters that smaller changes are often harder to detect and can be more frustrating because the outcomes are less noticeable.
- 76. Discuss prostate screening.** Thirty-two thousand people die each year from prostate cancer.⁷⁶ After lung cancer, prostate cancer accounts for more deaths in men than another type of neoplasm. Because risk increases with age beginning at about age 50,⁷⁷ make sure your male employees know whom they can talk to and where they can go for prostate screening.
- 77. Encourage self-examination.** Testicular cancer is most common in men between the ages 20 to 35.⁷⁸ Self-examination is one of the best ways to catch this cancer early. Information is available at www.cancer.org.
- 78. Talk about pharmaceutical interventions.** Smoking cessation rates double from 4 to 9% with placebo to 9 to 25% with the nicotine patch.⁷⁹ Make nicotine replacement therapy available to employees who are serious about quitting smoking. This is one of the most important health decisions an employee can make and nicotine replacement therapy can help.
- 79. Teach an ergonomics course.** Fifty percent of the U.S. workforce routinely uses a computing device to do their work.⁸⁰ Ergonomically designed keyboards and proper chairs can go a long way toward helping alleviate unnecessary pain and discomfort due to repetitive motion.
- 80. Promote dental hygiene.** About 50% of all adults have gingivitis (gum inflammation) and 80% have experienced some degree of periodontitis (inflammation of the gums leading to destruction of the bones supporting the teeth).⁸¹ By promoting good dental hygiene, you can help your employees enjoy their dental visits—or at least make them less painful.
- 81. Institute a company-wide flu shot.** Work loss days due to influenza total over 70 million annually.⁸² Providing your employees with a flu vaccination is an effective way to wage a successful war against the cold and flu.
- 82. Provide guidelines on proper physical activity.** In 1985, national survey data revealed that 56% of men and 61% of women in the U.S. either never engaged in physical activity or did so on an irregular basis.⁸³ Give your employees some ideas that they can put to use to help get them more physically active. They don't have to go to the gym—but small things like taking the stairs instead of the elevator can help a lot.



- 83. **Provide accurate information on alternative medicine/treatments.** Forty-two percent of adults reported using some type of alternative medical therapy in 1997.⁸⁴ Encourage your employees to consult with their own physician when looking at alternative medicine and treatments. Alternative medicine can be helpful, but remember, anyone can be published—including people selling miracle cures and snake oils.
- 84. **Offer excellent incentives.** One WELCOA member company is offering their wellness program participants a chance to win tickets to college football's Big XII Championship game. Their participation rates are nearing 93%—you do the math. People need additional incentives to motivate them to take action.
- 85. **Produce streaming health video.** Approximately 200 million adults in the United States have access to the Internet⁸⁵—a number that continues to grow day by day. Incorporating this technology into your wellness program can give it an innovative twist, attracting a larger and more diverse population.
- 86. **Learn names.** If only $\frac{1}{3}$ of Americans know their next-door neighbors,⁸⁶ how many Americans do you think know their coworkers— especially at larger corporations? Take the time to get to know your employees, names, the more personal touch you can add to your wellness program, the more likely people are to be comfortable with participating.
- 87. **Check your mail.** In 1995, the Internet handled more mail than the 177 billion pieces that went through the U.S. postal service.⁸⁷ With numbers like this, e-mail is an effective way to deliver your wellness message to your employees and their families. E-mail is particularly efficient if you don't have the world's largest wellness budget.
- 88. **Use major life changes as teachable moments.** It is estimated that in 2002 approximately four million babies will be born.⁸⁸ When an employee becomes a parent it's a great time to talk to them about their health and how they might alter habits to prepare for the future. Seek out employees who have experienced other major life changes (i.e., marriages, deaths, etc.) and offer information on the support that is available to help them cope with such changes. Employees who have dealt with such major life changes can serve as great role models and mentors for others experiencing the like.
- 89. **Initiate a Medical Self-Care Program.** In an address given by wellness expert Larry Chapman to the National Wellness Institute, Chapman remarked that 70% of primary care is sought for clinically inappropriate reasons—the doctor's visit is NOT always necessary! A great component of a medical self-care program is helping your employees talk with their physician. Include the specific questions employees should ask their physicians. Many times, people forget that the doctors are there to help them, not make their day stressful.
- 90. **Create a Doctor's Office Guide.** A study conducted by the New England Journal of Medicine found that in 1997 only 32% of physicians said they had the freedom to spend sufficient time with their patients—down from 84% in 1991.⁸⁹ It is important that your employees have the tools necessary to make the most out of visits with their physicians. Include in your guide the tips and strategies that make visiting the doctor worth their time and money.

Program Promotion

- 91. **Offer healthy food at your wellness gatherings.** By simply substituting one cup of plain, unbuttered popcorn for a one-ounce bag of potato chips, you save 130 calories and 10 grams of fat!⁹⁰ There's nothing wrong with a healthy bribe now and then. Try providing healthy snacks at your next wellness event. This can be an effective way to introduce the "infamous" health foods to your employees.
- 92. **Create a quiz.** The amount of knowledge in the world has doubled in the last 10 years.⁴² Considering this, it may be unreasonable that employees will remember much of what they see. To counteract this, make up a short quiz. Quizzes can help employees remember important information and can be fun—especially if they're linked to an incentive.
- 93. **Involve employees in decision making.** Four percent of unhappy customers complain; 96% simply go away angry.⁹¹ Increase your participation rates by listening to employee opinions and complaints. They say the customer is always right; your employees are your customers. Giving your employees a voice in the program will better ensure your program's success.

- 94. **Create wellness yellow pages.** The Yellow Pages was first published in the 1880s.⁹² Why has the Yellow Pages been so successful for so many years? Because it works. Create your own “Wellness Yellow Pages” to help spread pertinent information about your wellness program.
- 95. **Have message pads printed with health tips on them.** According to a study conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Business, people are exposed to approximately 500 advertisements every day.⁹³ Getting your wellness program into the mix may not be a bad idea. Promotional items such as printed note pads, pens, or plastic drinking cups can serve as great reminders about wellness information. These are great for that subtle reminder about living healthy.
- 96. **Get digital.** It is estimated that by 2005, one billion people will be connected to the Internet.⁹⁴ E-mail is an excellent way to reach employees right at their desks—and in their comfort zones. Try sending out a weekly wellness bulletin. You might be surprised at the results.
- 97. **Have a friend, bring a friend, need a friend, make a friend.** According to First Break all the Rules—a recent publication by the Gallup Organization—how employees answered the question “Do I have a best friend at work?” was a strong predictor of employee turnover, productivity, profitability, and customer loyalty.⁹⁵ Creating an incentive program that encourages your employees to bring friends or relatives to wellness program events is a great way to make your own employees feel more comfortable about participating as well as increasing overall participation rates.
- 98. **Designate a wellness ambassador.** According to a 1940 benchmark study, it was discovered that most people make decisions based on information they get from opinion leaders.⁹⁶ Use this fact to your advantage by electing an employee “opinion leader” of your own to spread the wellness message.



Grab Bag

- 99. **Break people’s stereotypes of wellness.** During the 2000 National Election, 84% of respondents to a Gallup Poll rated health care as either “extremely” or “very” important,⁹⁷ but ask most employees what their definition of wellness is and you’ll get a blank stare. Do some random and informal surveys to uncover your employees’ perception of wellness before they’re actually introduced to it. Use this information to make your program more effective. By doing this, you’ll have more success reaching the people that need help the most—and they’ll probably tell their friends.
- 100. **Identify non-smoking restaurants in your community.** According to the Environmental Protection Agency, secondhand smoke kills 3,000 people every year.⁹⁸ Think your employees don’t care? A recent Gallup Poll indicated that 44% of Americans favor a complete ban on smoking in restaurants.⁹⁹ If you distribute the “non-smoking” list, your employees will see it as a real value.
- 101. **Foster a friendly environment.** According to Dr. Dean Ornish, “loneliness and isolation...increase the likelihood of disease and premature death from all causes by 200 to 500% or more...” Start a lunch club, fire off an e-mail, or just introduce yourself—the point is that you can make your organization a healthier place just by being there for employees who don’t have an existing support structure.

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