



Caribbean Heads of Government, in response to the heavy burden of noncommunicable diseases on the citizens of the region, issued the Port of Spain Declaration in September 2007, "Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases," and declared that the second Saturday in September should be celebrated each year as Caribbean Wellness Day.

We invite you to join us on September 12 and help support this initiative.

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles in the Workplace

Employers and employee organizations can improve workers' health and performance by promoting healthier behaviors and lifestyles through special workplace programs and interventions.

A comprehensive study in 2003 on the effectiveness of workplace wellness programs showed that, after 3.6 years, such programs produced an average:

- 27 percent reduction in sick leave.
- 26 percent reduction in health care costs.
- 32 percent decline in workers' compensation and disability claim costs.
- savings-to-cost ratio of US\$5.81/US\$1.00.

A 2005 survey of 365 large USA-based companies showed that nearly half offer incentives for employees to participate in workplace wellness programs and to achieve improvements in their risk factors, including blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels, and body weight. Incentives included gift cards, prizes, merchandise, rebates of program costs, cash payments, and reduced medical co-payments.

What you can do:

- Celebrate September as Wellness Month

Tobacco

- Declare your workplace to be 100 percent smoke-free

Exercise

- Provide exercise facilities, safe walking trails, and trainers to encourage physical activity by both workers and managers.
- If possible, make those facilities available to the community (e.g., walking trails)
- Partner with others to establish Sunday Car-Free Street Days.
- Organize recreational activities such as line dancing, aerobic exercises, kick boxing, among others.

Healthy eating

- Organize healthy cooking demonstrations that showcase recipes that are low fat, low salt and delicious.
- Eliminate trans fats and reduce fried foods in cafeterias.
- Provide tasty, healthy food options with emphasis on local fruits and vegetables.



Screening and treatment

- Purchase automatic blood pressure monitors and weight scales for employee use.
- Offer confidential screening for blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight.
- Encourage employees to get regular check-ups and take medication as directed.

Promoting awareness

- Feature Caribbean Wellness Day logo and messages along with your company logo on T-shirts, hats, bags, posters, banners, and billboards.
- Sponsor public service announcements promoting Caribbean Wellness Day on radio or television.
- Purchase advertisements in newspaper supplements on Caribbean Wellness Day.
- Offer samples of healthy products and similar give-aways.

Key elements of successful workplace programs

- Clear goals and objectives.
- Staff and management involved in planning.
- Employees able to choose and define goals.
- Programs linked to business objectives.
- Strong management support.
- Effective communication.
- A supportive environment.