



Do you know what Caribbean Wellness Day is ?

Caribbean Wellness Day is an annual event geared at increasing awareness and promoting activities to address the epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which continues to severely impact the health, economy and development of the Region.

Recognizing the threat posed by NCDs, in The Declaration of Port of Spain, CARICOM Heads of Government outlined key strategies to prevent, control and reduce NCDs through the life course. This includes the need to “increase physical activity in the entire population”, especially in the workplace.

In light of this, for Wellness Day 2014, CARICOM Member States turn their attention to the working population of our society, with the slogan, the heart of a productive workforce is a healthy workforce.

It is noteworthy that a 2011 New York Times article cited the work place as a new source of rise in obesity. According to the article, a group of researchers reported that modern work tends to be more sedentary, requiring only light activity. You may agree that technological changes such as the Internet and email result in many employees being seated for longer hours, with less movement during work hours.

The Caribbean region has one of the highest rates of obesity in children and adults in the world. This can be attributed in part, to poor diets and a lack of physical activity, driven by profound changes in the way we live and play, with massive marketing of foods high in sugar, fats and salt; as well as several hours per day spent watching TV and playing video games.

In this regard, CARPHA declared July 2nd Caribbean Public Health Day and urged persons to Add Life to their Life, by making one healthy lifestyle change. These changes include:

- ✚ Walking 30 minutes a day; it reduce your risk of heart attack by half
- ✚ Reducing your salt intake to reduce your risk of hypertension
- ✚ Eating five servings of fruit and vegetables each day to reduce your risk of hypertension, heart disease and cancer
- ✚ Not smoking to reduce your risk of cancer and wrinkles and save money ☑ Reducing your alcohol consumption ☑ Staying on your medications, If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, to avoid complications like heart attacks, stroke, and kidney failure

The British Journal of Cancer reported in 2008 that men who exercise often are less likely to die from cancer than those who don't. According to the report, a study conducted over a period of seven years, found that men who walked or cycled for at least 30 minutes a day had a 34 per cent lower risk of dying from cancer than the men who did less exercise or nothing at all.

Research Cancer UK also states there is evidence that a healthy lifestyle can prevent up to half of all cancers - and regular exercise forms a key part of this.

CARPHA acknowledges that although there is a high level of personal responsibility for individuals when it comes to their health, there is also a major responsibility for governments and also employers to create an environment that promotes healthy living. This being the case, CARPHA would like to call on employers, in particular, to seek innovative ways to put physical activities back into the work place.

This does not have to be a costly initiative as offices can be “redesigned” to encourage walking. Incentives can also be offered for employees to take the stairs rather than the elevator or even to bike to work or take walks during their breaks.

As employers, let us promote preventive care by providing annual physicals or regular screenings, wellness programmes and regular immunization for our employees, so that we are able to nip treatable diseases in the bud. By taking these seemingly small steps, we can and will begin to reverse the NCD trend.

So, as we celebrate Caribbean Wellness Day with activities such as health fairs, fitness walks, sports and games, dance marathons, healthy food promotions, and health education sessions, let us commit, as individuals and employers, to healthy lifestyle behaviors not just for one day, but through the life course.

Dr. C. James Hospedales Executive Director, CARPHA



Here are some activities you can do right in your office setting in observance of Caribbean Wellness Day!

Stretching - At the Workstation Why is stretching important?

No matter how well a workstation is designed, problems may arise if attention is not paid to the way the work is done. Working at a computer often involves very few changes in body position. This lack of movement can lead to muscle pain and strain. What can be done to minimize this strain?

It is recommended that a person break for 5-10 minutes for every hour spent at a workstation. If possible, it is ideal to stand up and walk for this time (e.g., work tasks that involve standing, walking, or at minimum, a change of body position). Some of these stretches can be done at the same time.

- ✚ Vary the work tasks. Break up keyboarding tasks work by doing other job duties or tasks that involve moving around or changing body position. Try to stand up and move around.
- ✚ Look away from the screen occasionally and focus your eyes on an object far away.
- ✚ Take regular rest breaks to ease muscle aches, eye strain and stress.
- ✚ Relax your muscles, stretch and change position.
- ✚ Hold the stretch for a reasonable time (e.g., 10-20 seconds).
- ✚ Breathe normally.
- ✚ Do not bounce, pull/push excessively, or lock your joints. You should feel a stretch, but not pain. If you feel pain or severe discomfort, stop stretching. Ask your medical professional for advice.

Adapted from: Office Ergonomics Safety Guide, by CCOHS.



Join us for this year's Caribbean Wellness Day 2015

On Thursday, September 24th, the Ministry Of Health in collaboration with its key stakeholders will be hosting a Wellness Open Day Fair at the Battlefield Park, downtown Belize City, from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm.

This fair will include various information booths on Non-Communicable Diseases and its risk factors as well as discounted wellness services to the community.

Physical activity & wellness competitions will be held, e.g skipping rope, hula hoop and spin bike competitions among many other interesting features for the overall wellness of the mind, body and soul.

Save the date and come out on September 24th in support of Caribbean Wellness Day 2015!

