

# Promoting a healthy lifestyle at the workplace



## Be the Change



Promoting a  
**healthy lifestyle**  
at the workplace

*Be the  
Change*



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Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle at the Workplace – BE THE CHANGE

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Be the Change (BTC) programme is an innovative intervention advocated by the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia to promote health, well-being and work productivity of staff members.

The BTC programme was launched on World Health Day 2016 as Regional Director's special initiative.

BTC is built on the principle that individuals have the ability to adopt healthy lifestyles and prevent noncommunicable diseases when supported by a conducive workplace environment.

BTC advocates 6 WATCH components which include:

- WATCH your plate: to promote healthy eating
  - WATCH your waist and weight
  - WATCH your steps: to promote physical activity
  - WATCH your stress level
  - WATCH and monitor your changes: to encourage regular screening
  - WATCH your tobacco and alcohol consumption.
- 

# BTC **Be the Change programme**



The majority of the world population is in the working-age group. This group spends most of their waking hours at workplaces. Some occupy more than one job to make ends meet. The working population is increasingly adopting sedentary lifestyles, working behind computer screens, sitting at desks, staying in sitting positions most of the time, or standing in the same position for a long duration, especially workers in the service and manufacturing sectors.

Working conditions vary from the service sector to the manufacturing sector, yet sedentary lifestyles, stress at the workplace and unhealthy behaviour persists in all sectors, where workers are unaware of healthy diets, are unable to engage in appropriate physical activities for their physical and mental well-being, or do not have the means to cope with stress and maintain mental health.

The initiative 'Be the Change' (BTC) is an innovative intervention launched in the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office in 2016 to promote workplace health and wellness. The initiative offers a variety of options for employees, especially in the areas of diet and physical activity, to improve their physical and mental well-being, and effectively address sedentary lifestyles. Eating healthy, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding alcohol and tobacco are ways of preventing major lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancers as well as their risk factors such as raised blood pressure, raised blood sugar level and overweight. However, awareness and practices of these healthy benefits are still low among the population.



Workplaces that are safe and promote well-being are a key part of ensuring a healthy and sustainable workforce. The BTC initiative builds on the perspective that individuals have the ability to adopt healthy lifestyles when supported by a conducive workplace environment that promotes “healthy eating, healthy habits, physical and mental fitness”.

## Principles of Be the Change:

- **Individual empowerment:** Change yourself and believe that you are in control of your own habits and health. Every individual change brings greater changes as a result of a chain of effects.
- **Institutional/organizational image/brand:** Change your working environment through promotion of healthy and happy workplaces, making health a core business value.
- **Champions and role-modelling:** “Good for Business and Good for you” – take actions and be accountable for yourself and others, build communities of practice and champions for healthy lifestyles and healthy workplaces to be positively emulated by others.
- **Partnership:** Create a chain of positive energy to bring changes in society and the world at large, to continue to grow, involve and evolve.



*You must be the change you want to see in the world.*

*As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world – that is the myth of the atomic age – as in being able to remake ourselves.*

– Mahatma Gandhi





# Six strategic actions to Be the Change

Actions	What can be done
<p data-bbox="154 300 283 352"><b>Watch your plate</b></p> 	<ul data-bbox="378 300 935 627" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="378 300 882 352">• Promote consumption of a variety of foods and awareness regarding their serving sizes</li><li data-bbox="378 368 790 392">• Encourage conscious calorie reduction</li><li data-bbox="378 408 891 461">• Make available fresh vegetables and fruits in the cafeteria</li><li data-bbox="378 477 935 563">• Make clean water the default drink in the workplace and at meetings, and discourage sugar-sweetened beverages</li><li data-bbox="378 579 930 632">• Discourage consumption of foods high in salt, sugar and saturated and trans fats</li></ul>
<p data-bbox="154 652 283 738"><b>Watch your waist and weight</b></p> 	<ul data-bbox="378 652 963 775" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="378 652 963 705">• Encourage the use of weighing scales, measuring tapes and devices to monitor individual physical fitness</li><li data-bbox="378 721 935 774">• Place weighing scales, measurement tapes and body mass index charts in strategic locations</li></ul>
<p data-bbox="154 963 283 1016"><b>Watch your steps</b></p> 	<ul data-bbox="378 963 938 1316" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="378 963 885 1050">• Actively engage and promote physical activities: walking, using stairs, taking active breaks and movements throughout the day</li><li data-bbox="378 1066 938 1136">• Encourage staff to join sports events, use the fitness centre, or participate in exercise sessions provided by the organization</li><li data-bbox="378 1152 857 1204">• Conduct daily active and happy breaks at the workplace</li><li data-bbox="378 1220 885 1244">• Promote at least 30-45 minutes of daily exercise</li><li data-bbox="378 1260 938 1313">• Offer ways to do monthly self-assessment of physical activity level</li></ul>



## Actions

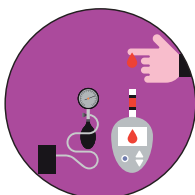
## What can be done

### Watch your stress level



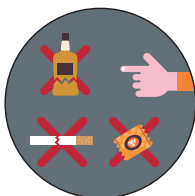
- Introduce stress consultation and counselling services for staff
- Create a physical space for reflection, thinking and religious practice
- Create a system to reinforce a healthy, positive and balanced workplace
- Promote de-stressing (relaxation) exercise e.g. yoga, tai-chi, deep breathing, meditation, etc.
- Create time and space for recreational activities at work
- Build social support groups

### Watch your change



- Conduct semi-annual physical screening of blood sugar, blood cholesterol and blood pressure at the worksite in addition to routine medical services
- Promote physical and mental health camp/activities as part of the organizational retreat to reduce stress, weight management, curb obesity and create support networks

### Watch your tobacco and alcohol consumption



- Make a tobacco-free hiring policy
- Make all premises of the organization tobacco- and alcohol free
- Encourage moving towards alcohol-free special events and festivals
- Introduce self-help and group-help for those who need support for alcohol or tobacco cessation efforts at regular intervals



# Watch your plate

## Promoting healthy diets at the workplace



People should begin their day with a healthy breakfast and partake in a regular lunch to be more productive. An environment where there is availability of healthy food choices is key to promoting healthy diets that can become the norm in the workplace.

Workplace cafeterias need to be pleasant and hygienic.

Display of food samples, healthy combinations and calories per serving should be established. Healthy choice labelling and messages reminding staff to select such foods over other foods made with refined carbohydrates and high in fat, sugars or salt, and water placed around the cafeteria and other areas where food is served or eaten are good investments at the workplace.





## Healthy eating

### For employees:

- Select whole grains, brown rice over refined cereals
- Select healthy fats and proteins. For vegetarians, at least one plant-based option such as tofu or beans
- Choose poultry, fish, or lean meat
- Avoid processed, salted meats and fish
- Avoid adding excess salt or high salt flavour enhancers and always use iodized salt
- Select small portions if weight loss is the goal
- Eat adequate fruits and vegetables as part of your daily diet

### For employers and cafeteria management:

- Serve plenty of vegetables to make it the main bulk of a meal
- Vegetables should be cooked just adequately, or served raw (thoroughly washed)
- Offer a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits
- Cooking methods: use low-fat options and bake, broil or grill foods
- Avoid serving products that contain industrial trans fats
- Limit sugar and salt usage in cooking
- Dressings, condiments, pickles and sauces should always be served on the side, and in small portions
- Serve small portions of food using appropriate-sized serving utensils
- Avoid adding sugar in fruit salads or adding sugar syrups

Example of healthy choices



### Healthy snacks / healthy break

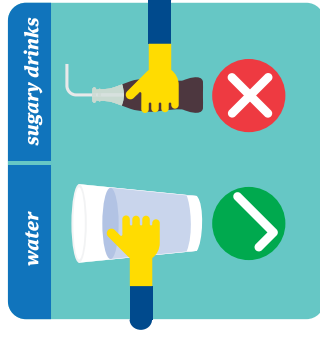
- Always offer/serve fresh fruit and vegetables as a snack
- Use multigrain cereals and breads. Large items of food should be cut into halves or smaller portions
- Provide options for vegetable sticks with a low-fat, low-salt dip
- Serve only bite size of pastries and other fried items high in salt, sugar and fat
- Avoid serving cookies, biscuits, and cakes
- Replace sugar candies or sweets with unsalted nuts and dried fruits

Example of healthy snacks with fruits and fresh water or pure fruit juices without sugar added. This can be locally found products.



### Beverages

- Safe water should be provided for drinking and be available at all times
- No sugar-sweetened beverages or sugary beverages should be served (includes soft drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks, energy drinks and all other beverages sweetened with high-fructose corn syrup or sugar, energy drinks or cordials and fruit juices)
- Possible alternatives could be tea, green or black, or flavoured with low-fat milk, lemon, or buttermilk
- Usage of bottled water should be minimized to reduce environmental impact of plastics



## “Eat healthy, feel good, gain more energy”



## Use self-reminder notes for healthy eating

*I will start my day with a healthy breakfast.*

*I will choose water and bid adieu to sugary drinks.*

*I will add vegetables and fruits in my diet; and subtract sugar, salt and fat.*

*I will choose quality over quantity and eat smart.*

*I will go for whole grains and avoid products made with refined flour.*

*I will limit the intake of 'added sugar' in my diet.*





# Watch your waist and weight

## Measuring physical well-being and preventing major diseases



Obesity is one of the leading risk factors for noncommunicable diseases – such as diabetes, high blood pressure – and death in the world today. In 2014, more than 1.9 billion adults 18 years and older were overweight; of these, 600 million were obese. In South-East Asia, obesity among all age groups is on the rise.

WHO defines overweight and obesity as follows:

- Overweight is a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to  $25\text{kg/m}^2$ ; and
- Obesity is a BMI greater than or equal to  $30\text{kg/m}^2$ .

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Abdominal obesity is measured by the waist circumference. Waist circumference values of over 94 cm for men and 80 cm for women increases risk of diabetes or high blood pressure.

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## MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT



Measuring of BMI and waist circumference will help identify risks and assist in taking corrective actions for better health. Obesity is preventable.

Raised BMI is a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases such as:

- *cardiovascular diseases* (mainly heart disease and stroke), which were a leading cause of death in 2012;
- *diabetes*;
- *musculoskeletal disorders* (especially osteoarthritis – a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints); and
- *some cancers* (including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney and colon).

### **BMI classifications (International)**

#### **BMI of less than 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>**

A BMI of less than 18.5 indicates that you are underweight, so you may need to put on some weight. You are recommended to ask your doctor or a dietician for advice.

#### **BMI of 18.5–24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>**

A BMI of 18.5–25 indicates that you are at a healthy weight for your height. By maintaining a healthy weight, you lower your risk of developing serious health problems.

#### **BMI of 25–29.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup>**

A BMI of 25–30 indicates that you are overweight. You may be advised to lose some weight for health reasons. You are recommended to talk to your doctor or a dietician for advice.

#### **BMI of over 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>**

A BMI of over 30 indicates that you are obese. Your health may be at risk if you do not lose weight. You are recommended to talk to your doctor or a dietician for advice.







Note: suggested cut-offs for Asians are: 18.5–23 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (normal); 23–27.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> (overweight) and 27.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher (obese).

Combining BMI with waist circumference measures and other risk factors for heart disease can yield your risk for developing obesity-associated diseases

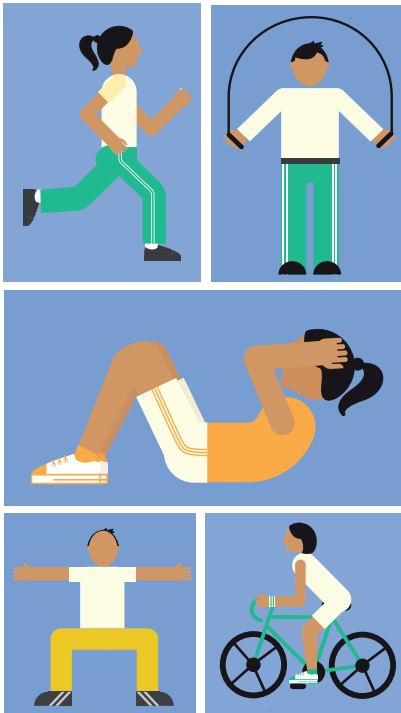
WEIGHT lbs	100	105	110	115	120	125	130	135	140	145	150	155	160	165	170	175	180	185	190	195	200	205	210	215
kg	45.5	47.7	50.0	52.3	54.5	56.8	59.1	61.4	63.6	65.9	68.2	70.5	72.7	75.0	77.3	79.5	81.8	84.1	86.4	88.6	90.9	93.2	95.5	97.7
HEIGHT in/cm	Underweight				Healthy								Overweight				Obese				Extremely obese			
5'0" - 152.4	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
5'1" - 154.9	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
5'2" - 157.4	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
5'3" - 160.0	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
5'4" - 162.5	17	18	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
5'5" - 165.1	16	17	18	19	20	20	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
5'6" - 167.6	16	17	17	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31	32	33	34	34
5'7" - 170.1	15	16	17	18	18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31	32	33	33
5'8" - 172.7	15	16	16	17	18	19	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	29	30	31	32	32
5'9" - 175.2	14	15	16	17	17	18	19	20	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	31
5'10" - 177.8	14	15	15	16	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	31
5'11" - 180.3	14	14	15	16	17	18	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	31
6'0" - 182.8	13	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	30
6'1" - 185.4	13	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	30
6'2" - 187.9	12	13	14	14	15	16	17	18	18	19	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	29	28
6'3" - 190.5	12	13	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	28	27
6'4" - 193.0	12	12	13	14	14	15	16	17	17	18	18	19	20	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	25	26	27	26





# Watch your steps

## Promoting physical activity



Numerous health benefits are associated with regular physical activity and exercise. Scientific literature shows that adults and older adults benefit the most from regular physical activity. Benefits include lowering their risk of early death, coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, adverse blood lipid profile, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, risk of colon and breast cancer, weight gain; improving cardiorespiratory and muscular fitness; preventing falls; reducing depression; having better cognitive function; as well as many benefits related to work performance of employees. WHO recommends that physical activity for health is the primary prevention of noncommunicable diseases. For adults aged 18–64 years (working age group), physical activity includes leisure time activities; transportation activities (walking or cycling); occupational (work) household chores; and playing games, doing sports or planned exercise, in the context of daily, family and community activities.



## WHO global recommendations

1. Adults aged 18–64 should do *at least 150 minutes* of moderate-intensive aerobic physical activity throughout the week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous-intensive aerobic physical activity throughout the week or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensive activity.
2. **Aerobic activity** should be performed in bouts of at least 10 minutes' duration.
3. For additional health benefits, adults should increase their moderate-intensive aerobic physical activity to 300 minutes (5 hours) per week, or engage in 150 minutes of vigorous-intensive aerobic physical activity per week, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensive activity.
4. **Muscle-strengthening activities** should be done involving major muscle groups on 2 or more days a week.

## Why promote physical activity at the workplace?

Evidence suggests that physical activity can benefit an organization because active workforces tend to:

- report less illness and recover more quickly from illnesses they do get
- experience less work absences
- experience lower staff turnover
- be more productive
- have fewer industrial injuries
- report higher levels of satisfaction with their work
- create a positive corporate image.



*Physical activity is any skeletal movement that results in energy expenditure that can be quantified in units called kilocalories or referred to as calories*



*Exercise is a subset or type of physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive and designed to increase or maintain physical fitness*



### How to increase access to physical activity at the workplace

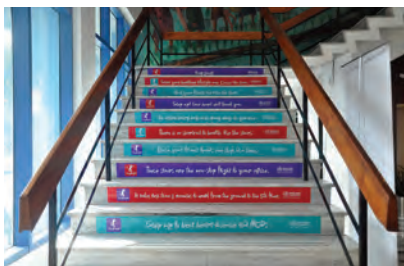
- Provide on-site fitness facilities or buildings that are conducive to physical activity, as well as easy access to walking and running routes; distribute safe walking maps.
- Create a culture of physical activity by encouraging brief exercise breaks throughout the working day.
- Integrate physical activities in meetings as part of routine healthy and active breaks.
- Install employee shower facilities and changing rooms.
- Offer reduced-fee fitness or a recreation centre memberships to employees and their families.

### Suggestions on how to encourage employees to be more physically active

- Encourage employees to walk, cycle, or jog part or the entire journey into work (combined with offering secure cycle parking, developing a travel plan and providing information on and actively promoting local walking and cycling routes).
- Encourage the use of stairs by displaying the healthy working lives stair walking posters.
- Allow staff to work flexible hours that can accommodate physical activity, such as longer lunch breaks.
- Encourage participation in local and national events such as sponsored walks and fun runs.



- Provide incentives for active commuting to work.
- Arrange corporate challenge with prizes or incentives that involves physical activities (e.g. assign teams to compete for walking, jogging, running, swimming, cycling that most miles achieves within a given period).
- Join a corporate membership scheme with local leisure services and promote this with staff.
- Arrange a team gathering or corporate retreat that involves some form of physical activities.
- Provide staff with information on the benefits of physical activity and healthy balance.



**How much exercise we need to burn 550 Kcal of chicken and fried rice:**

- **140** minutes of walking or 11.67 Kms; or
- **94** minutes of walking on stairs or walk up and down 6 floors for 10 times; or
- **76** minutes of bicycling or 19 Kms; or
- **100** minutes of gardening; or
- **139** minutes of scrubbing floor



## Stretching exercises at workplace

The following sequence of yogic postures have been modified for practising in the office premises and can be done any time during working hours. Take a break every few hours and practise 5 to 6 or all postures in each break (as per your convenience). This way you can get the benefits of each posture and get rid of tension in your muscles and joints. The body parts that suffer most while sitting for long hours are the shoulders, neck, back and legs. All the postures mentioned below target these body parts and release tension.

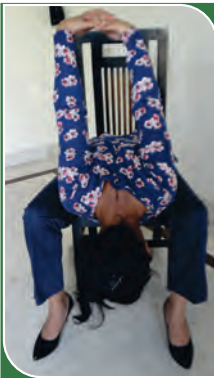
**Note of caution:** Never overdo anything for quick results. Be patient and take it slowly and steadily.

**Duration:** Each posture can be maintained for 10 seconds to up to 2 minutes. In case of any discomfort, you may reduce the duration. You are your own best judge. Do not compete with anyone or overdo the exercises.

**Effect:** Each posture has a target body part (TBP) and affects mainly that body part. Try and feel that body part and the muscles in action.

**Discomfort:** This entire series is very mild. But those who have a lot of stiffness in their body may feel slight pain in their muscles initially. Differentiate between the good pain and the bad pain. Good pain is about a healthy stretch in your muscles. Bad pain will always make you feel apprehensive. Enjoy the good pain and avoid the bad pain.

**Repeat:** Some postures have to be done on both the left and right sides to maintain balance. Ensure that you do both.



Arms behind back, interlock your fingers, bend forward and raise your arms up. TBP: releases tension from the shoulders



Palms on knees, inhale, look up and make your back concave, keeping your mouth closed. With each exhalation, pull your shoulders forward and round your back, chin touching the chest. TBP: Spine and neck.



Sit without resting your buttocks on the chair. (i) palms on the knee (ii) arms interlocked and lifted up. TBP: thighs, knees and legs. If you have weak knees, be cautious & keep palms on knees.



Fingers interlocked, palms facing away, lift up the arms and stretch. Hold for a while and then bend sideways. TBP: Arms, shoulders and sides of the chest and abdomen. Repeat on the other side.



Source: Compiled and created by Monica Thomas for WHO on International Yoga Day, 2017.



# Watch your stress level

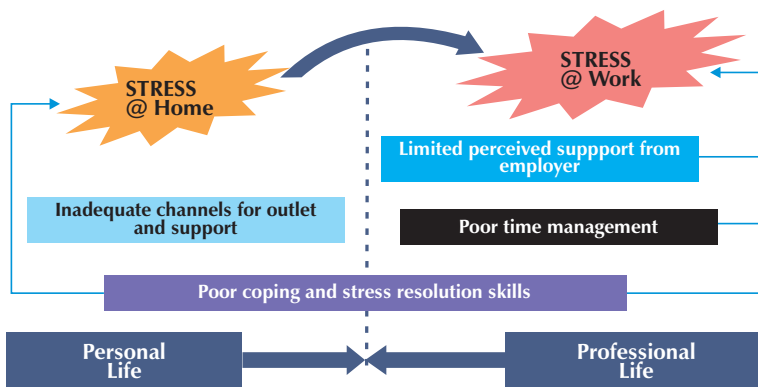
## Promoting mental well-being and happiness at the workplace

Stress has multiple causes. It is not simply the result of a stressful event alone. What manifests as 'stress' is usually the end product of the interaction of several predisposing factors.

- People tend to carry stress along with them – both from work to home and home to work, thus stressful situations at home can contribute to stress at the workplace.
- Inadequate personal coping mechanisms and/or support structure at home make it difficult to cope and become a source of stress.

For most of the employees, it is not lack of knowledge or skills that causes stress; rather, it is the pressure of meeting deadlines.

- Again, in many situations, it is not lack of time but improper management of time that makes it a challenge to meet deadlines.
- "Perceived" lack of support from supervisors also contributes to the experience of stress.
- Lack of communication or ineffective communication also leads to stress.



**Stress in the long term leads to depression, anxiety, hypertension, diabetes and many other health conditions. It is important to manage your stress.**

### **Possible solutions**

#### **At the level of the employee**

- Learn time management skills
- Learn simple de-stressing (relaxation) exercises e.g. deep breathing
- Develop channels for venting emotions and sharing feelings at home/with friends.

#### **At the level of the employer/supervisor**

- Create an environment where employees feel free to share what they feel
- Provide communication skills training for all employees across the ranks
- Create a system with a balance of positive reinforcement and healthy and constructive criticism
- Create space and time for recreational activities, and religious practices if you wish to
- Make provisions for crèches for employees with young children.





## Warning signs of stress

**Chronic, ongoing stress can wear down the body's natural defenses, leading to symptoms including:**

- dizziness
- general aches and pains
- headaches
- loss of appetite
- increased appetite
- muscle tension in neck, face, or shoulders
- sleeping problems
- racing heart/thumping heart, palpitations
- cold and sweaty palms
- tiredness, exhaustion
- weight gain or weight loss
- feeling and being irritable, impatient, or forgetful.



## Steps to ease stress

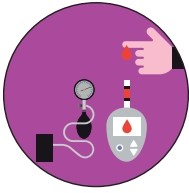
### At the level of the employee

- Try to identify the source of stress.
- Ask yourself what you can do about the sources of your stress. Take action where you can. Many things you cannot change; certain things you can; internalize and accept it.
- Teach yourself to have a positive attitude.
- Try and take charge of your response to triggering factors.
- Do not feel isolated; look around; there are colleagues who can be good friends; given the chance, they will be willing to listen to you.
- Share your feelings instead of becoming angry or defensive; you will be pleasantly surprised.
- If you have to stand up for yourself, do so in a polite manner.

### At the level of the employer/supervisor

- Exercise regularly to help release stress and anxiety and to make you feel better and able to cope with stress.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques. Try breathing exercises, meditation and yoga.
- Eat healthy.
- Learn time management; lack of this skill may lead to stress at the workplace.
- Learn to say “no” to things that you feel might add stress to your life; you can do this politely.
- Make time for hobbies, interests and religious practices, if you wish to.
- Get enough rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.
- When you are stressed, do not look for relief in unhealthy food, alcohol, tobacco or too much caffeine, as this in the long term will harm you.
- Make friends in your workplace and take time to be with them; once in a while, it improves relationships and makes you stress free.





# Watch and monitor your changes

## Monitoring changes



As individuals and organizations adopt and take actions for change, monitoring of changes is important as it provides/consolidate information showcasing progress.

Individuals can learn from the result of their behavioural change and gain a sense of fulfillment adding to a sense of satisfaction at the workplace.

Positive change is most likely to occur, as changes are happening side by side with

organizational change to promote healthier lifestyles. The organizational approach for Be the Change has a higher positive impact than having individuals try to change themselves on their own. Changes in an organization that are conducive to help people to adopt active and healthy lifestyles create a new norm and new culture for a healthier society. Knowing what is changing and how it is changing means one must have tracking records or monitoring procedures to see the change. Monitoring change is important for individuals and organizations to learn what works and to share those lessons with each other. They could be role models for others who want to replicate the same experience.



### Watch the change in individuals

- Individuals can watch a change by monitoring their new adopted behaviour with innovative tracking devices for physical activity, nutrition intake, mental balance and sleep;
- Creative health pledges;
- Watch visible change from physical fitness, weight, endurance and level of happiness;
- Adopt buddy systems for health pledge monitoring to motivate and inspire for positive changes;
- Extended support to family behavioural change.



### Watch the change in an organization

- Provide incentives to employees with personal tracking devices such as pedometers, BMI assessment scales, etc.;
- Medical check-up policy, including follow-up – conduct semi-annual screening of blood sugar, blood cholesterol and blood pressure at the worksite in addition to routine medical services;
- Promote physical and mental health camp/activities as part of the organizational retreat to reduce stress, weight management, curb obesity and create support networks;
- Introduce an annual health fair where information booths for health promotion are set up; and a check-up camp is organized (blood pressure, sugar, cholesterol) for staff, family and friends;
- Generate (written) reports that contribute to transparency and accountability, and allow for lessons to be shared more easily.



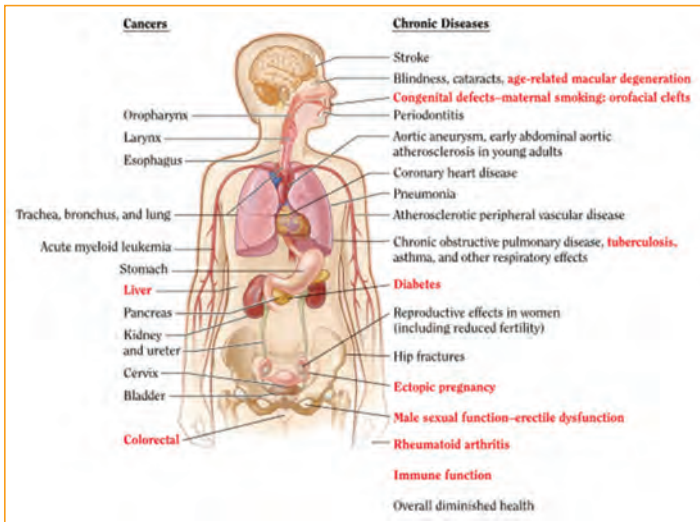


# Watch your tobacco and alcohol consumption

## Increasing productivity and saving resources

Tobacco and alcohol are main risk factors for all major lifestyle diseases. The use of tobacco and alcohol cause dependence/addiction, leading to health, economic and social consequences. This includes reduced attention, absenteeism at work, debt, increased risk of injuries while performing tasks, compromising resources to fulfil basic family needs, etc. The compromised performance and absenteeism of employees addicted to tobacco and alcohol lead to overall loss of productivity at the workplace. Making workplaces healthy, safe, completely tobacco, alcohol and drug-free leads to healthier employees and increased productivity. Workplaces can be made completely tobacco free. We recommended that the workplace issue a code of conduct for all staff NOT to consume alcohol during office hours, after

### Smoker's body



Source: US Surgeon-General's Report: 2014, US Office of Smoking & Health



hours, or during office functions (events), especially office parties. Information and education on the harmful use of alcohol will be helpful to curb risks that contribute to a number of health problems. Employees have to be assisted with tobacco cessation and alcohol de-addiction. The workplace policy is an important mechanism to control tobacco and alcohol users, benefiting nonuser employees and their families, while making the workplace productive and pleasant.

### Benefits of a tobacco-free workplace

#### For employees

- The benefits on health of quitting tobacco products start right away.
- Workers who quit tobacco can put money spent on buying tobacco products for better use for themselves and their families.
- Workers who are exposed to cigarette smoke or other smoking product smoke will be saved from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke.

#### For employers

- A tobacco-free environment helps create a safer, healthier workplace.
- Reduce direct health-care costs to the company
- Reduce absenteeism due to tobacco-related illnesses
- Reduce maintenance costs of workplace facilities (affected by smoke, matches, cigarette butts, spits, fire hazards, etc.), office equipment, carpets and furniture last longer
- Lower risk of fires
- Lower rates on health, life and disability insurance coverage as fewer employees use tobacco
- Managers benefit as absenteeism is reduced and productivity increases.



# Benefits of reducing alcohol consumption at the workplace

Drinking alcohol seems to be understood as a personal or individual concern rather than a concern for employers and workplaces. Evidence shows that drinking too much or at the wrong time can be harmful especially when drinking while operating machinery, using electrical equipment, ladders, etc. Drinking alcohol before work or before coming on shift, or during lunch time can affect an employee's work performance. Alcohol consumption may result in reduced work performance, damaged customer relations and resentment for other staff who have an overload of work due to alcohol users. Drinking alcohol raises the drinker's blood pressure, and increases the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke. Reducing alcohol consumption benefits the drinker directly and improves office interpersonal relations, thereby promoting a healthy and safe workplace.



## How to create a tobacco-free workplace

- Create a written tobacco-free workplace policy
- Let employees know the harm of using tobacco
- Provide support for tobacco cessation, including through tobacco quitline
- Declare workplace premises as tobacco-free zone
- Use signage and education materials that display prohibited use of tobacco at the workplace or office premises
- Promote rights of nonsmokers and educate all employees on harmful effects of exposure to second-hand smoke
- Be the role model (supervisor/manager)
- Give recognition to employees quitting tobacco so that they can act as role models for others
- Establish tobacco-free recruitment policies.

## How to reduce alcohol consumption at the workplace

- Have a clear policy on banning use of alcohol during office hours and in public functions or events organized by the organization
- Develop guidance and policy on alcohol use in the organization and employee's code of conduct
- Inform and provide health education on harmful use of alcohol
- Introduce self-help and social support group for counselling on drugs and alcohol addiction
- Establish employee assistance programme (EAP) to refer employees to external counselling, in combination for sick leave provision, and offering confidential services
- Have workplace monitoring, reporting, investigating; and establish discipline measures

### **AVOID TOBACCO AND LIMIT ALCOHOL**





# Expected outcomes

## Outcomes

'Be the Change' is a result-oriented programme guided by a set of core health behaviour and wellness indicators expressed under the six strategic actions.

### Immediate outcomes

Campaign messages, events and activities of BTC are to be visible in the workplace. Employees are actively participating in BTC at workplaces and among professional networks. Employees are sharing and engaging with their other social networks (family members, children, friends and neighbours) to promote health and well-being. Be the Change can be applied to anyone in the workplace and beyond.

### Expected personal changes towards healthy lifestyles

- becoming active
- being aware/conscious of food consumption
- being able to make the right choices to maintain good health
- being able to have good mental and physical balance at the workplace
- increasing capacity for time management and reducing risk behaviour
- improving overall health outcomes and productivity at work
- improving interpersonal skills and engagement in social network
- improving workplace environment.



## Intermediate outcomes

Employers and management at workplaces play important roles to ensure availability of healthy choices, supportive environment and facilities to encourage employees to engage in healthy activities, and manage stress and reduce risk behaviours. Employees who adopt the six strategic actions will be making the right choices for healthy lifestyles adhering to healthy diet, being physically active, managing stress and maintaining good health and well-being.

As a result, the whole organization will become a healthy, safe and happy workplace with simple actions that employees made to change themselves. The workplace will be transformed into a healthier environment. The image of the organization will improve. Some employees at this stage can become active change agents to influence friends, families and personal networks to adopt healthy lifestyle practices.

## Long-term impact

As the whole organization adopts healthier lifestyles and changes the workplace environment for over a period of time, healthy lifestyles will become the norm, or the organizational culture. The 'Be the Change' initiative could have a long-lasting positive impact in creating healthy and happy workplaces. Positive change will create a ripple effect from individuals in an organization to their friends and families and to a professional network, and from one organization to more organizations and then to the larger society. Thus, a healthy lifestyle culture is expected to curtail noncommunicable diseases that impinge on society today.



Healthy meetings



'Be the Change' activities at WHO meetings including at the Sixty-ninth session of the Regional Committee of South-East Asia

## How to use Be the Change programme?

**Be the Change** (BTC) is a demonstration, for all other agencies and workplaces, on how to promote healthy workplace to prevent noncommunicable diseases. Member States are welcome to select and adapt the BTC package in their respective countries, based on their priorities and context.

## How can WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia support?

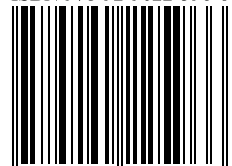
Provide technical support to raise awareness, design, implement and evaluate of healthy workplace programs, which may cover healthy diet, physical activity, stress management, screening and early treatment for noncommunicable diseases and risk factors, and other health promotion activities.



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