



WELLNESS COUNCIL
OF WEST VIRGINIA

health- headlines

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Industry insider information to help YOU do your job better, faster and smarter

“Long overdue investment” Communities put prevention to work

The US Department of Health and Human Services released \$650 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the Prevention and Wellness Fund. The initiative, entitled *Communities Putting Prevention to Work*, will create healthier communities across the nation through innovative and proven approaches that address physical activity, nutrition, obesity, and tobacco use (administered by the CDC). [Workplace experts think business leaders can play a major role here.]

The dedication of these funds represents a “historic and long overdue investment in communities that will achieve long-term, lasting improvements in physical activity, nutrition, weight, and tobacco cessation,” said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

The Prevention Institute (www.preventioninstitute.org) calls this “the culmination of a national movement for prevention that many of you a played a part in.” The Prevention Institute calls on the wellness “community” to make the best of these funds: “Prevention advocates must now work together to ensure that these dollars have the greatest impact possible. By investing in quality prevention that promotes equitable health and safety outcomes, community engagement, and **multi-sector collaboration**, and emphasizing broad-scale, sustainable change, funded communities, and those of us who support their efforts hold the keys to success.”

Communities can apply for grants at www.grants.gov (deadline Dec. 1, 2009). More information is available at www.hhs.gov/recovery/programs/cdc/chronicdisease.html.

Bottom-line business

Americans cut health activities

Results of an American Heart Association national survey could spell trouble for American’s overall well-being and heart health in particular. Judge these key points for yourself with this alarming trend away from healthy activities (blame it on the bad economy):

- 57% said the economy has affected their ability to take care of their health.
- 32% have made a change in the last 6 months to save money, such as delaying preventive care appointments, not taking medications, or skipping the dentist.
- 25% of those with gym memberships have cancelled in the previous 6 months.
- 42% plan to make changes in the next 6 months that may impact their health, such as buying fewer fruits and vegetables.

But there is some good news ... Americans taking better care of themselves despite rising health care costs

More than half of Americans (51%) believe there are good things about the current health care system, but major changes are needed, according to the *2008 EBRI Health Confidence Survey*. The survey was released by the Employee Benefit Research Institute and Matthew Greenwald and Associates, underwritten by the Principal Financial Group.

The survey indicates that Americans are showing some level of personal responsibility through heightened awareness and action. Two of 5 Americans report they are often or always aware of the cost of their doctor's visit. Americans who experienced higher health care costs over the last year

- Tried to take better care of themselves (76%)
- Chose generic drugs more often (74%)
- Talked to the doctor more carefully about treatment options and costs (63%)

RESEARCH BRIEFS

- **It's what's for dinner.** Work compromises parents' food choices for themselves and their children. More stable work conditions may be associated with more positive strategies such as more home-prepared meals, eating with the family, keeping healthful food at work, and less meal skipping, according to a Cornell University study in the *Journal of Nutrition Education*. Long work hours and irregular schedules mean more time away from family, less time for household food work, and difficulty maintaining a regular meal pattern.
- **Premiums rise.** Premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance rose to \$13,375 annually for family coverage this year, with employees on average paying \$3,515 of that, according to the benchmark *2009 Employer Health Benefits Survey* released by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust.
- **See this.** Corrected vision impairment could prevent billions of dollars in lost productivity annually, according to a study by researchers from Johns Hopkins and other international partners. Nearly 158 million people globally suffer with vision impairment (that can be corrected by glasses and an eye exam).
- **More worry.** Financially distressed employees have a tough time functioning at work. They are more likely to smoke, eat unhealthy diets, be overweight, and not

exercise. These lifestyle risks can contribute to poor health outcomes and reduced productivity and heightened health care costs for employers, according to the Personal Finance Employee Education Foundation, which suggests employers provide financial education resources (www.PersonalFinanceFoundation.org).

- **Exercise during the workday** enhances productivity, according to a UK study in the *International Journal of Workplace Health Management*. Male and female desk workers in 3 worksites tracked their mood, stress management, and productivity on days they exercised and on days they did not. The implication is that employers should provide opportunities for exercise at work.

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Odds @ the end: Why do we try to carry 10 plastic grocery bags in each hand rather than make 2 trips to bring in the groceries?

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