



Wellness means making the most of your health and boosting the quality of your life.

In addition to taking care of your body, you can work toward wellness by:

- Reducing the stress in your life.
- Taking up a new hobby.
- Making new friends by joining a club, taking a class or doing volunteer work in your community.
- Discussing your values with people who are close to you.

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# A Personal Wellness Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!



## WHAT IS "WELLNESS" ALL ABOUT?

The term "wellness" means so much more than just being free from disease. Wellness involves the *whole person*, not just someone's blood pressure, body fat or eating habits.

Wellness is a lifestyle approach that leads to good health and a satisfying life. **When people focus on personal wellness, they:**

- **Become aware of the consequences of the choices they make in their daily lives.** For example, Sally reads up on smoking and learns that each cigarette she smokes shortens her life by up to 20 minutes.
- **Accept responsibility for themselves and their total well-being.** Sally used to blame

her brother for getting her "hooked" on cigarettes, but now she realizes that it is her choice to continue to smoke.

- **Develop habits that help improve their physical, emotional, social and mental fitness.** Sally decides to quit smoking by using nicotine patches and by joining a local Smokers Anonymous support group. She makes new friends in the group and is successful in kicking her cigarette habit.

It's common for healthcare workers to take better care of others than they do of themselves. How about you? Be sure to consider your own wellness needs!

## THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

The idea of wellness involves much more than just being physically healthy. Why? It's because the mind and the body are so closely connected.

- For example, let's look at the immune system—which serves as the body's defense against infectious organisms and other invaders. Research has shown that negative emotions—such as anger, frustration and

fear—keep the immune system from working properly. On the flip side, positive emotions—such as love, contentment and joy—boost the immune system, increasing its ability to keep us healthy.

- Countless studies have proven this mind-body connection. So what's the bottom line? A healthy mind promotes a healthy body...and vice versa!

## THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS

To work toward wellness, it's important to focus on five different components of life, including:

**Emotional Wellness.** People who are emotionally well are able to express their feelings freely. They know how to handle the stress of their daily lives and know when and how to seek support from others. They also work to develop healthy relationships with others.

**Intellectual Wellness.** Ongoing education is important for intellectual wellness. People who are intellectually well enjoy learning new things, expressing their creativity, and improving their skills. (For example, by reading this fact sheet, you are working on your intellectual wellness.)

**Physical Wellness.** Proper nutrition, exercise and other healthy habits are all part of physical wellness. People who are working on their physical wellness avoid the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol. They also seek proper medical care when necessary—including getting preventative testing (like mammograms) and vaccines.

**Social Wellness.** People with social wellness contribute to their community by maintaining healthy relationships with a variety of people—despite any differences in background or ethnic origin. They practice good communication skills with everyone they meet and when conflict arises, they work to resolve it in a healthy manner.

**Spiritual Wellness.** People who are spiritually well spend time thinking about their own beliefs and values and strive to find a source of inner peace and strength. This "soul searching" may involve a relationship with a "higher power" which helps them deal with the ongoing challenges that life brings.

**Personal wellness involves both the mind and the body. It's important to spend time working on all five aspects of wellness. (But you don't have to do it all at once!)**

## JUST A FEW TIPS FOR IMPROVING WELLNESS

- Create a specific plan of action that will guide you toward your goal. Rather than "I will eat better," try "I will have at least four servings of vegetables every day." Or, instead of "I'd like to learn something new," set a goal like "I will read at least one book every month."
- Keep in mind that part of emotional wellness is respecting yourself as an individual, so make your own decisions about how to improve your wellness. If you decide to change a bad habit to please someone else, chances are you will fail. Instead, it's important to make changes when you are ready to take better care of yourself and/or to get more out of life.
- Be realistic by not taking on too many changes at once. Wellness habits need to



*Maybe some of your co-workers have the same wellness goals as you and can offer their support!*

be convenient and easy to fit into your life or you'll probably give up on them.

- Remember that you don't have to be perfect...just do the best you can. Wellness is a journey that continues throughout your lifetime. Each step along the way may add years to your life AND life to your years.