

Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles

By Dave Smith

We want all our employees and their families to lead healthy lives. That was the reason for forming the Wellness Committee last year. Your co-workers helping on the committee are Jason Bradley, Kristine Buss, Jane Dolphin, Judy Espland, Justin Fredricks, Pat Grunewald, Dawn Karls, Jeanne Kohl, and Steve ver Kuilen. Dennis Roelke joined the group this year and we're always looking for new volunteers with ideas and enthusiasm.

Our Wellness Committee has targeted nutrition as the theme for 2005. This fits well with the implementation of health risk assessments, running of exercise programs, and encouraging healthier eating. Of course we won't focus entirely on nutrition. We'll still have a few exercise programs thrown in to give employees an incentive to get off their butts.

I wanted to use this article to let you know about diabetes which is a very important health concern. It ties right in with the nutrition theme because poor eating habits and their effects are a leading cause of diabetes.

March 22 was Diabetes Alert Day. In conjunction with that, the Alliance launched its Diabetes Toolbox. Pat Grunewald and I worked with a group to help develop the toolbox. The Diabetes Toolbox can be found at www.alliancehealthcoop.com/diabetes/index.

Why are we concerned about diabetes? The Alliance targeted diabetes because about two out of every 25 people in Wisconsin have diabetes. It is the fourth leading cause of death and costs an estimated \$2.8 billion annually in health care expenses and lost productivity...that is just in Wisconsin. That is 40 times our companies' sales in 2004. The prevalence of diabetes is becoming more common thanks to sedentary lifestyles, poor eating habits and obesity.

Diabetes has no cure, but can be managed to delay and even prevent serious complications. First, individuals need to know if they have the disease. Surprisingly, almost 100,000 individuals in Wisconsin have diabetes that has not been diagnosed.

Please take advantage of the Health Risk Assessments that we offer a couple times per year or go to your physician to have routine tests...you pick the approach. Either way, the company pays for the testing AND will discount your medical premiums by \$10 per month. About 2/3 of our employees have taken advantage of this so far. We want the other 1/3 to participate.

So, all of that brings me back to the focus for this year.....nutrition. Let's all work on improving our nutrition, especially increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables we eat. You will feel better physically and feel better about yourself. Oh, and please stay away from Burger King's latest breakfast offering...the Enormous Omelet Sandwich. No, I haven't tried one I heard about it on the radio...720 calories...49 grams of fat...1,860 mg of sodium. You don't even need to be a nutritionist to know those numbers aren't healthy.

Here are three things to do: (1) support the Wellness Committee; (2) eat more fruits and vegetables; and (3) save \$120 per year by getting your health risk assessment or visiting your physician.

The Quality Forum's Workplace-Focused Diabetes Project Team would like to thank Dave Smith for sharing this document and generously offering to have it included in the toolbox as an example for other employers.