

Highlight on Health

Do you need ideas about how to reach employees who are not located in a typical office setting? SEPTA, an Independence Blue Cross Wellness Partner for nearly 12 years, shared its ideas at IBC's Marketing Department annual off-site meeting in August.

Wellness REWARDS, SEPTA's worksite wellness program, was created to empower employees to be active and responsible partners in self-improvement in order to achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The program focuses on education and personal awareness. Mary Becker, SEPTA's program coordinator, works closely with the employee assistance program and IBC to provide a comprehensive and fun program that is confidential and completely voluntary.

"Wellness Wednesdays" are conducted at a different SEPTA depot several times a month. By offering services at most of their depots, SEPTA is able to target and reach employees who are not in the conventional office setting. Every Wednesday, HR representatives and wellness team members travel to a different SEPTA depot to meet with employees and promote the *Wellness REWARDS* program. During these events, laptop computers are available so employees can view ibxpress.com, the EAP website, and SEPTA's employee information website. Also, the "Know Your Numbers" campaign is promoted, encouraging employees to know their blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, and body mass index.

SEPTA uses multiple communication channels to reach its geographically dispersed employees. Also on Wednesday, the wellness team emails healthy recipes, safety tips, and information on healthy ways to improve lifestyle to employees with computer access. Flyers, paycheck stuffers, and a quarterly newsletter provide information to employees without access to a computer.

In addition to the weekly depot events, emails, and mailed materials, SEPTA implements an annual health fair at its headquarters and schedules health seminars, screenings, and a mammography campaign. A flu vaccination campaign is provided during the fourth quarter each year.

SEPTA's goal is to be the # 1 health and wellness resource for its employees — a goal it works toward with the help of IBC's Wellness Partners program.

If you have a success story that you would like to share, please contact your Wellness Coordinator for more information.

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Meet your Wellness Coordinators

Kristin Forlenza (left) and Diana Gulick
(not pictured – Geneva Jackson)

Welcome to our newest Wellness Partners®

Aqua America, Inc.
Automated Financial Systems
CDI Corporation
Charter School Management, Inc.
Danella Companies, Inc.
Dansko Inc.
NutriSystem
New Courtland, Inc.
J.W. Pepper & Son, Inc.
Whitford

Research at a Glance

“Efficacy of an E-mail intervention for the Promotion of Physical Activity and Nutrition Behavior in the Workplace Context”

An article in the July/August 2005 *American Journal of Health Promotion* detailed a study on the effectiveness of a 12-week workplace email intervention program. The email messages were designed to increase physical activity and promote good nutrition in a group of employees in Alberta, Canada.

The results of the study were positive – members of the intervention group increased their mean total activity levels, felt more confident that they could participate in activities, had a greater intention to participate in activities, and saw more advantages and fewer disadvantages of physical activity. Positive changes were also seen in the intervention group in reference to nutritional habits, such as healthy eating, low-fat cooking, and avoiding high-fat foods.

While the effects of the changes in activity level and nutritional choices were small, the study shows that email-based intervention programs can be a cost-effective way to promote healthy habits.

If you are interested in launching an email-based program, visit the Healthy LifestylesSM Promotion Guide online at www.ibx.com/promotionguide. The site offers a variety of items that can be emailed to employees on themes such as nutrition, weight management, flu prevention, smoking cessation, and stress management. For more information, contact your Wellness Coordinator.

Monthly observances

November 15 is the Great American Smokeout[®]

Every year on the third Thursday of November, thousands of Americans commit to quit smoking for 24 hours during the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout[®].

Despite the availability of many smoking cessation therapies, only about 1 in 7 current smokers report having tried any of the recommended tools during his or her last attempt at quitting (American Cancer Society). Research has also shown that smokers are most successful when they have support, including the encouragement of family and friends, nicotine replacement products, or involvement with a support group.

Independence Blue Cross members are eligible for a \$200 reimbursement for completing an approved smoking cessation program. More information and a list of approved programs is available at www.ibxpress.com.

A customizable turn-key program for the Great American Smokeout is available on the Worksite Wellness page, located at www.ibx.com/worksite_wellness.

October

National Breast Cancer Awareness month – www.nbcam.org

National Down Syndrome Awareness month – www.ndss.org

SIDS Awareness month – www.firstcandle.org

November

American Diabetes month – www.diabetes.org

Lung Cancer Awareness month – www.lungcanceralliance.org

Great American Smokeout – November 15 – www.cancer.org

December

World AIDS Day – www.unaids.org/en/default.asp

For more monthly observances, visit www.ibx.com/promotionguide

Health news and tools for employees

Reduce breast cancer risk with physical activity

Women who are physically active have a decreased risk for breast cancer. But no one knew how much exercise was enough to make a difference until researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle looked at the question.

They examined data from the massive Women's Health Initiative that enrolled more than 74,000 women ages 50 to 79 and followed their habits from 1993 through 1998.

Here's the bottom line: Women who currently perform the equivalent of 1.25 to 2.5 hours of brisk walking per week (or its equivalent in a similarly vigorous exercise) had an 18% reduction in the risk of breast cancer. Add more hours of brisk activity – 10 hours or more per week – and there is a slightly greater reduction of risk.

These findings suggest that increased physical activity and even a couple of hours a week of vigorous (not necessarily strenuous) activity, can reduce risk for breast cancer in women who are past menopause.

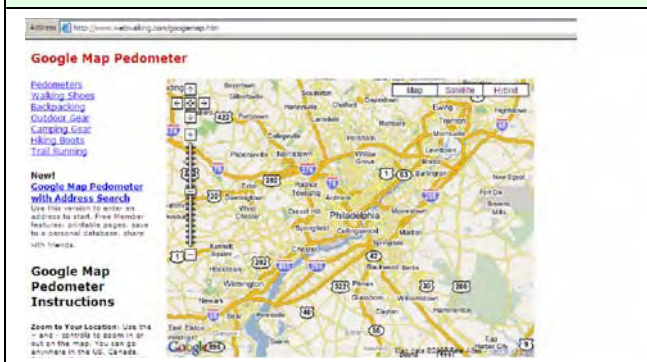
The findings were reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Free-quent flyers

Free Google Map pedometer

Use the Google Map Pedometer to plot and calculate the distance of your walking route. You can then use the calorie converter to figure out how many calories you burned on your walk.

www.webwalking.com/googlemap.htm.



Newsletter promotes healthy eating for employees with diabetes

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Let your coworkers know about a newsletter that offers helpful information about living with diabetes.

The American Diabetes Association and FoodFit.com have partnered to offer a new newsletter, Diabetes FoodSmart. The newsletter provides healthy eating tips and recipes for nutritious, tasty food.

For more information or to sign up for the newsletter, visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org.

The importance of keeping up to date on vaccines

Each year, 46,000 adults in the US die from diseases that vaccines can prevent such as pneumonia and flu, according to the American Medical Association. In addition to your doctor's office, you may also be able to get your annual flu shot at work, at a local clinic or community center, or at the drugstore.

Influenza – It’s nothing to sneeze at

The influenza disease is more than just a common cold; it’s a serious respiratory illness. Nationwide, influenza and its complications cause an average of 36,000 deaths and approximately 226,000 hospitalizations each year. These victims and thousands more are the “faces” of influenza – people recommended for annual immunization by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Are you a “face” of influenza? More than 220 million people are recommended to receive the influenza vaccine annually. That’s more than 2 out of every 3 people in the US. Despite this recommendation, influenza immunization rates fall far short of where they should be every year.

To help prevent influenza from spreading and to encourage influenza immunization, Independence Blue Cross has partnered with the American Lung Association to bring *Faces of Influenza*, a national educational campaign, to this area. This multi-year public awareness initiative helps Americans put a “face” on this serious disease and recognize annual influenza immunization as an important preventive measure to protect themselves and their loved ones every year.

Adults and children with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, and diabetes are at increased risk for complications from influenza and should be immunized every year. People 50 years of age and older, pregnant women, and children 6-59 months of age, as well as household contacts of persons at high risk, should also be vaccinated to help prevent influenza-related complications and the spread of this dangerous disease.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to prevent influenza and its complications.

For those who have not yet received their influenza vaccination, IBC urges all area residents to call their local health care provider and make an appointment for an influenza vaccination.

Vaccination typically begins in October and can continue through March. In most seasons, influenza virus activity peaks in February or March, so vaccination throughout the entire influenza season is beneficial and recommended.

To find an influenza vaccine provider in your area, visit the *Faces of Influenza* website www.facesofinfluenza.org, and use the Flu Clinic Locator, the largest online directory of public influenza clinics.

Additional information about influenza and immunization can also be found on the *Faces of Influenza* website.

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