Staying Healthy in Challenging Times

Results from the Stanford Health and Lifestyle Assessment (SHALA), taken last year by almost 7,000 employees, show that wellness is important to us as a community—and that we have more work to do, pg. 5

Dr. Bill Haskell, emeritus professor at the Stanford Prevention Research Center, discusses how new U.S. guidelines for physical activity are coming along, while dispensing a dose of common sense, pg. 7

Stanford’s Health: An Aggregate Report

Questions For Our Expert
Welcome to the inaugural issue of the BeWell Bulletin, a wellness information resource developed jointly by the Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation (DAPER), the Health Improvement Program (HIP) and Human Resources.

In each issue, you will find upcoming health and wellness programs, campus resources, feature stories and tips, as well as relevant research articles and interviews with Stanford faculty and staff.

The New Year is a popular time to renew interest in personal health. In these challenging times, one of the best ways to cope with stress and uncertainty is to maintain your health. As the campus experiences budget uncertainties, investing in your personal health will pay dividends for both you and the university. So now more than ever, it is our hope that in 2009, you will make a commitment to strive for health improvement. Perhaps this commitment could take the form of walking from the Caltrain station, signing up your department for a wellness class or ordering fruit for your next morning meeting.

So, Happy New Year from all of us and may 2009 be the year you get more active, eat better and unwind. Remember, the only person who can make a difference is YOU!

Wes Alles  
Sr. Research Scholar  
Department of Medicine  
Prevention Research Center  

Eric Stein  
Sr. Associate Athletic Director  
Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation  

Diane Peck  
Vice President  
Human Resources

Wellness on Wheels

Have you ever wanted to take a Healthy Living or Fitness Class from the Health Improvement Program, but couldn’t fit it into your busy schedule? Now, HIP is bringing its most popular classes right to your department! Wellness on Wheels, a new mobile health improvement program designed to help foster work life balance, is available to Stanford University and Stanford Hospital & Clinics. Contact Jayna Rogers at 724-7347 or jlrogers@stanford.edu for more information.

Classes For You, Too

A common misconception is that Physical Education classes are only for students, but they are open to faculty and staff as well on a space available basis. Additionally, other activities offered by the Physical Education, Recreation and Wellness team are open to employees, too—including outdoor education, recreation classes, intramural sports club sports and many other programs. Contact Jennifer Sexton at 724-2919 or jbsexton@stanford.edu for more information.
Investing in your health is a lot like a savings account. The benefits come, not after year one, but over the long haul. It’s an analogy Dr. Wes Alles—a senior research scholar at the Stanford Prevention Research Center—likes to use, and one that complements an equally important point: A commitment to living healthier should be gradual and sustained over time.

“In the first year, you don’t make much in interest. But you really haven’t invested that much,” says Alles, who also directs Stanford’s Health Improvement Program (HIP). “The next year, you get not only the benefits from the second year, but you also get the benefits of the first year. So you get this compounding interest. The same thing is true with lifestyle.”

The fact is, 80 percent of an adult’s health is determined by lifestyle. The rest is shaped by genetics, environment and medical care. And at Stanford, where a wealth of opportunities to improve one’s health are offered through the BeWell program, there’s really no excuse not to get started today.

After completing the SHALA, you get a personalized report that you can then use as a guide as you create a personal wellness plan online (or in person, if preferred).

This year you can earn an additional taxable $100 by completing five of the eight easily achievable activities listed below.

1. Fitness Assessment
2. Personal Training Sessions
3. Wellness Workshop
4. Wellness Coaching (2 Sessions)
5. Healthy Living Class
6. Group Fitness Class
7. Annual Well-visit/Screening
8. Commit to 2 Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors

The BeWell program is led by Eric Stein, Senior Associate Athletic Director for Physical Education, Recreation and Wellness. Major partners in the effort include the Office of the Provost, Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation, Health Improvement Program, Human Resources and other offices across campus (see Campus Wellness Resources on back).

“One of the biggest goals of the incentive program is to get those who haven’t been engaged to be more involved,” said Stein, who was hired in 2006 specifically to raise the level of recreational fitness and wellness on campus. “Life is about choices, understanding those choices and then taking the first step toward making a lifestyle change.”

Helen McMahon, an administrator in the Stanford Center for International Development, did just that. For well over a decade, McMahon had gradually put on weight by eating out a lot, having a sedentary job and going through some very stressful situations. Then in 2005, at the age of 55, she began taking fitness and behavior-change classes offered through HIP, as well as incorporating healthier habits at home—such as 4-mile-long power walks and eating more vegetables.

“When we moved into a new place, it was covered in mirrors—I couldn’t stand looking at myself anymore,” says McMahon, who is now 60 pounds lighter. “It’s such a great feeling to know how much I’ve accomplished just through will power and the desire for change!”

On that note, the university is beginning the year with a new BeWell @ Stanford Employee Incentive Program. Benefits-eligible employees who complete the Stanford Health and Lifestyle Assessment in 2009 will get a taxable $150 wellness reward—even if you took the assessment last year.
New Year’s Resolution Success

Why do so many of us set New Year’s resolutions, only to give up on them before March? We don’t lack willpower. We just need to be more realistic. To do that, it would help first to understand the difference between short- and long-term goals.

Look at a long-term goal as the “finish line,” where you see yourself in six months or a year. It can be ambitious, but it also needs to take into account your current lifestyle and circumstances. Meanwhile, a short-term goal is more modest and represents a behavior just a small step beyond what you’re currently doing. Eventually you will achieve your New Year’s resolution (i.e., your long-term goal) by setting—and achieving—successively more challenging short-term goals.

Remember: It’s not how healthy you are in a month or two, but how healthy you are in a year … or two, or 10. The only way to get there is gradually, and by celebrating the milestones along the way.

For information on behavior-change programs offered through the Health Improvement Program, go to http://hip.stanford.edu.

Know Your Numbers

Some numbers are just second nature: date of birth, the last four digits of your social security number and the PIN for your debit card. Equally as important are the numbers that indicate your blood pressure, total cholesterol level and body mass index. While committing those measurements to memory isn’t necessary, monitoring them regularly is important.

Why do they matter? The numbers speak for themselves: Roughly one in every four adults has high blood pressure, while about one in three is at risk for high cholesterol. In addition, there are approximately 60 million Americans with pre-diabetes or diabetes. These diseases are often called “silent killers” and are among the leading causes of cardiovascular deaths.

Today, we have the technology and information to take control of our health. And if you are covered by a medical plan offered through Stanford, one of the most effective ways to stay on top of your numbers is to prevent disease in the first place. This is why your health plan offers an annual physical exam.

You might also consider giving blood. You will find out your blood pressure, blood type and total cholesterol. For more information, visit http://bloodcenter.stanford.edu.
Your Results Are In

It’s not a competition, but when you look at how health conscious Stanford’s employees are compared to the general U.S. population, it’s pretty impressive. An online survey last year completed by just over half of the university’s 13,000 employees indicates that we have healthy behaviors and few risk factors.

According to the Stanford Health and Lifestyle Assessment (SHALA), only 4 percent of university employees smoke while around the country it’s 24 percent. And the number of Americans who engage in moderate and rigorous physical activity are 15 and 23 percent, respectively. At Stanford, we double those numbers.

However, there are many of us who would still benefit from making a few lifestyle adjustments. More than 29 percent report being overweight, while 15 percent report being obese. Stress also seems to be a big problem, with 36 percent of us reporting that our stress levels are high enough to affect our health. So there’s still room for improvement, and 2009 is a perfect time to get started.

The Stanford Prevention Research Center presented findings from the SHALA in December 2008. Results were based on 6,815 employees who completed the confidential survey last year. Responses are kept in a secure location and are only reported in the aggregate.

In the chart below, listed on the left, are key areas for improving health, as identified by “Healthy People 2010,” a statement of national health objectives developed by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. To the right are baseline levels in the U.S. population, followed by the targets set by “Healthy People 2010,” with the percentages for Stanford on the far right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Behaviors/Risk Factors</th>
<th>US Population</th>
<th>2010 Target</th>
<th>Stanford</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body Weight Status</td>
<td>% at a healthy weight</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% who are obese</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity</td>
<td>% 30+ minutes moderate exercise 5+ days/wk</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% 20+ minutes vigorous exercise 3+ days/wk</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% strength training 1+ days every 2 weeks</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% flexibility training 1+ days every 2 weeks</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% how often walk for transportation</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>% who eat 2+ servings of fruit per day</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% who eat 3+ servings of vegetables per day</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% who eat 3+ servings of whole grain per day</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarette Smoking</td>
<td>% who currently smoke</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Use</td>
<td>% who engage in high-risk alcohol consumption</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Pressure - Hypertension</td>
<td>% with high blood pressure</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Cholesterol</td>
<td>% with high blood cholesterol</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>Rate with diabetes (per 1,000 population)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Falls short of baseline | Meets/exceeds baseline | Meets/exceeds target
Kam Morrella and Carolyn Tomlin, colleagues in Stanford Conference Services, illustrate how the university’s commitment to health improvement has influenced employees in their everyday lives. Encouragement started at the top, from administrators in Residential & Dining Enterprises, and Morrella and Tomlin took the message to heart.

Not that they didn’t already have reasons of their own to get on the road to wellness. Morrella suffered a heart attack eight years ago—at the age of 49—and said breathing well has been a problem. For Tomlin, a desire to be healthier holistically, “both inside and out,” has become more of a priority as she gets older.

At first, the biggest challenge for Morrella was getting in the right frame of mind. But she started making smarter food choices and incorporating long walks into her morning and evening commute—eventually shedding 28 pounds. “The amount of weight I needed to lose was pretty overwhelming,” said Morrella, manager of events and meeting planning. “But I kept remembering what tools I used when I quit smoking and knew that I could use the same ones to move forward with getting my body to respond to eating and walking.”

Tomlin also said mindset was important, as well as education and self-motivation. “This included changing my eating habits—not a diet—to eating healthier foods such as greener, leafier vegetables, fresh fruit, cutting out starches and sweets, and drinking lots of water,” the conference account manager said.

Morrella also touted the benefit of the buddy system, and in Tomlin, she found someone who had just as much interest in getting healthier. Both take advantage of the free Caltrain GO Pass issued by Parking & Transportation Services. When they’re on the same schedule, they can walk together to the office from the University Avenue station in the morning, and back to the station at the end of the day.

“It is one minute at a time, one half pound at a time, and the ‘high’ from walking—or whatever exercise you find to work for you—is just an added bonus,” Morrella said. To that, Tomlin added that it’s also important “to make it personal for the individual and not for someone else, and to do it at your own pace.”

Activity Tip
Trekking to and from Caltrain is just one of many options for getting your walk on at Stanford. With nearly 100 outdoor sculptures on campus, mapping out a self-guided tour should be a breeze. Or for a more traditional walk, do a lap or two around Cobb Track or Lake Lagunita.

What’s your story?
Have you made changes in your life that have benefited your overall health and wellness? If so, we’d like to hear how you did it. Simply e-mail your story to us, at bewellbulletin@stanford.edu, and be sure to include your name and phone number.
Questions For Dr. Bill Haskell
Professor Emeritus in the School of Medicine

Q: What is the biggest misconception about physical activity?
A: In the past, there was really a “no pain, no gain” belief. I think the general public is beginning to realize that there can be substantial gain, without pain.

Q: Your focus is on developing new physical activity guidelines for the general population. What are they?
A: The new guidelines state that the first target for everyone, regardless of size or shape, is to start out slowly and to try and progress to 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity per week. And, to remember that independent of weight loss, you are getting substantial health benefits.

Q: What are those health benefits?
A: The primary health benefits are chronic disease prevention, like heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, stroke, colon cancer, breast cancer and osteoporosis. In the older population, major benefits also include an increased physical independence.

Q: What trends do the guidelines reflect?
A: The first is maximizing flexibility, so that people have choices for the type and duration of activity. The other is an appreciation that, for a large segment of the population, the current guidelines of 30 minutes of activity five days a week is a substantial leap. We’re working with the idea that some activity is better than none.

Q: So, you’re talking about incremental participation?
A: Yes. The other key point is that benefits can be drawn from a wide range of activities—that you can mix and match activities throughout the week to fit your schedule.

Q: What is the most important takeaway for our reader?
A: The first message is the least active people are at the highest risk. The least active, maybe 20 percent, have the highest risk of poor outcomes. Getting up and doing something is a lot better than doing nothing. The second message that we have wrestled with is how to frame recommendations related to weight management. Just telling people they can control weight gain from physical exercise is probably a bit misleading; they also have to pay attention to their caloric intake.

Q: If the solution is simple, moderate exercise and paying attention to our caloric intake, why don’t more of us do it?
A: Because the alternatives are so easy. The food industry spends literally billions of dollars trying to entice you. So, that means a lot of really good tasting food. And unless you are a professional athlete, the entertainment industry is driven towards sitting and watching. … So, our whole society is driving down physical activity for more and more of the population.

Q: If you could impart one piece of wisdom, what would it be?
A: Include physical activity in your life on a regular basis. I think the easiest way to do that is to find activities that you really enjoy. And, in many cases, the reason for doing it will be as much social as physical.

Q: Any final thoughts?
A: It is never too late, not in terms of age, nor in terms of “Oh, I’ve already got heart disease or I’ve already got diabetes, so I’m not going to do anything.” In fact, the opposite is true. These groups have more opportunity for benefits.
Campus Wellness Resources

- **Department of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation**: physical activity classes, fitness assessments and personal training, 650.724.2919, SUwellness.stanford.edu
- **Health Improvement Program**: healthy living, behavior change and fitness classes, 650.723.9649, hip.stanford.edu
- **Stanford Prevention Research Center**: disease prevention research, 650.723.6254, prevention.stanford.edu
- **Human Resources**: medical insurance, retirement and benefits, 650.736.2985, hrweb.stanford.edu
- **Vaden Health Center**: physical, mental and social health, 650.723.0238, vaden.stanford.edu
- **Wellness and Health Promotion Services**: student wellness and health education, 650.723.0821, vaden.stanford.edu/wellness
- **Diversity and Access Office**: workplace inclusion, 650.725.0326, stanford.edu/dept/diversityaccess/
- **Center on Longevity**: aging well, 650.736.8643, longevity.stanford.edu
- **Center for Integrated Medicine**: alternative medicine, 650.498.5566, cancer.stanfordhospital.com/forPatients/services/complimentaryAltMed
- **Women's Health**: women's health care resources, 650.498.7408, womenshealth.stanford.edu
- **Stanford Dining**: healthy food choices and locations, 650.725.1508, dining.stanford.edu
- **Faculty-Staff Help Center**: counseling services and workshops, 650.723.4577, helpcenter.stanford.edu
- **WorkLife Office**: parenting resources and elder care, 650.723.2660, worklife.stanford.edu
- **Human Performance Lab**: risk factor screening, 650.724.6272, sportsmedicine.stanford.edu/Human_Performance_Lab.html
- **Parking & Transportation Services**: alternative transportation, 650.723.9362, transportation.stanford.edu/
- **Environmental Health & Safety**: work safety services, 650.723.0448, ehs.stanford.edu
- **Sustainable Stanford**: sustainability programs on campus, 650.721.6530, sustainablestanford.stanford.edu
- **Stanford Blood Center**: blood, plasma and platelet donations, 650.723.7831, bloodcenter.stanford.edu
- **Cantor Arts Center**: free museum, 650.723.4177, museum.stanford.edu
- **Office for Religious Life**: multi-faith resource, 650.723.1762, religiouslife.stanford.edu
- **Woods Institute**: Environmental solutions, 650.725.3402, woods.stanford.edu

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