



THE HEART  
AND STROKE  
FOUNDATION  
SOUTH AFRICA

### **Employee Wellness Week (5 -9 July 2021) - Encouraging Employers To Create Healthier Work Environments**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) emphasizes the importance of employee wellness days to encourage employers to invest in their employees' health and well-being. The Foundation calls on employers to be proactive in reducing the effects of day-to-day stressors and negative health outcomes which ultimately impacts levels of productivity in South Africa. Employee Wellness Week takes place from 5 - 9 July 2021 and presents an opportunity to raise awareness of the need to create a healthy work environment. There is evidence to show that in a healthy work environment, there is lower absenteeism, an improved work ethic, and higher safety levels.

Dana Govender, Health Promotions Manager at Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) says, "given the prevalence of cardiovascular disease and severe COVID-19 cases strongly associated with existing NCD's, including CVD, Hypertension and obesity, we aim to provide effective ways of raising awareness in the corporate and business sectors to invest in the health of employees. On top of daily life worries, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world as we know it to include new stressors that lead to burnout quicker". According to a recent MetLife Employee Benefit Trends Study, two out of three employees feel more stressed than before the pandemic and now is the essential time for Employers to look at ways to mitigate the burnout risk.

Stress becomes unhealthy when it is excessive, chronic and managed poorly. Being stressed often leads to other unhealthy behaviours, of which most of them are major risk factors for heart disease and strokes like unhealthy eating; alcohol consumption; and smoking. Instead of turning to alcohol, smoking or caffeine to relieve stress, rather exercise regularly and eat a healthy balanced diet. This will not only help boost heart health but can also uplift physical and mental wellbeing. Products endorsed by our Heart Mark and Diabetes South Africa Endorsement Programmes are a guaranteed way to buy food lower in salt, sugar, saturated fats, and higher in fibre.

Make returning to work after COVID-19 more comfortable by focusing on employees physical and mental health, productivity and connections. Upon returning to work after COVID-19, health and safety should be the employer's biggest focus. The first step is ensuring the physical workplace is safe for employees to work in. After cleaning the workplace, it's important to encourage employees to keep it safe and healthy. When everyone does their part, the whole office will feel more at ease. Self-isolation and quarantining during the pandemic may have affected your employees' mental health. HR teams should be aware of the potential effects and have resources ready to help. A major goal of returning to work after COVID-19

is to get employees back to work with as little interruption as possible. To accomplish this, make the office feel as normal as possible. Flexibility, honest communication and adherence to best practices will help ease the transition as employees adapt to the “new normal” back at the office.

Improving well-being in the workplace has been a goal of the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** for many years, and there is a universal agreement that a healthy workforce is a productive and happy one. The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa encourages employers to create a **healthier workforce**. We conduct health-risk assessments, an important pillar of our Foundation’s wellness programme’s work in ensuring the health of both our public and private sector communities, including blood pressure measures, testing for blood glucose and cholesterol and Body Mass Index (BMI). Our wellness service is an essential aspect of creating wellbeing at the workplace and helps employees assess their health to make appropriate lifestyle changes. Employers also gain insight into the health profile of their staff.

The assessments can also be accompanied by a health talk by our certified professionals to help employees understand that being healthy is not about a diet, but rather about long-term habits which are a lifestyle. We are also able to conduct virtual health talks and offer information leaflets.

To book your Employee Wellness Day contact:

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**END**

Interviews will be conducted with our Health Promotions Team, Dieticians and CEO, Professor Pamela Naidoo and other relevant experts. To co-ordinate and confirm interview dates you are welcome to contact the Public Relations and Communications Department on 021 422 1586 or

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