

How to get involved?

The "Guide to Participating Organizations," available at www.paho.org/wellnessweek, was developed for countries and cities in the Americas that wish to become part of this initiative. This document, along with other communication materials, describe in detail the steps required to participate in Wellness Week each year.

Also, to facilitate the dissemination and promotion of the event, a Wellness Week blog was developed, <http://new.paho.org/blogs/wellnessweek/>, so that countries have a space to share their experiences and information about events that will take place in different cities during that week.

Visit our Wellness Week Blog

<http://new.paho.org/blogs/wellnessweek/>



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Background



Wellness Week began in 2011 as an initiative to illustrate the power of local action to combat non-communicable diseases NCDs (ENT). This was an activity built on the experience of “Wellness Day in the Caribbean” which occurred alongside the United Nations High-Level Meeting on NCDs. During this event, more than 192 heads of state and world leaders discussed, at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, what actions to take to prevent the NCDs pandemic. The major themes addressed were: cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, as well as interventions aimed at key risk factors: smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and poor diet.

NCDs are responsible for more than 36 million of deaths worldwide, a quarter of them among people under 60 years of age, and 80 percent in low and middle-income countries. The impacts of these diseases not only affect the health sector, but also present a significant economic burden for these countries. According to a report from the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) “Best Buys: Reducing the Economic Impact of Non-Communicable Diseases in Low and Middle Income Countries,” it is estimated that, between 2011 and 2015, the economic loss for these countries will surpass \$7 trillion dollars if health promotion and intervention efforts against NCDs remain inadequate.

Thus, Wellness Week has become an initiative to mobilize multiple stakeholders including local authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations, and the general public, to raise awareness and to remind everyone that each person plays a key role in preventing NCDs. Additionally, Wellness Week has influenced the development of initiatives and public policies in other sectors, that address the social determinants of health, emphasize the importance of health promotion, and encourage the creation of healthy environments.

Objectives



PAHO / WHO, and its partners in the region of the Americas, have made the commitment to support the annual Wellness Week in September to renew the agreements reached by the leaders of the countries during the High-Level Meeting on NCDs held at the UN headquarters in September 2011.

General Objective:

Wellness Week aims to develop a social movement that mobilizes local authorities, civil society organizations and leaders from different sectors of society. It aims to bring these players together to build public policies and develop programs to reduce risk factors and raise awareness about the growing burden and unequal distribution of the threat posed by non-communicable diseases for development.

Specific Objectives:

Promote the importance of public policies in all sectors to create a favorable environment for healthy living. Identify and intervene on the social, economic and environmental determinants related to the risk factors of NCDs.

Draw attention to and strengthen the work of community-based networks for health promotion in schools, universities, municipalities and workplaces.

Collaborate with communities to take action against non-communicable diseases.

Involve all sectors of society with a special emphasis on civil society organizations.

Promote the creation of healthy work environments involving workers, employers and their organizations.

Re-orient health programs to expand their services and enhance community-level NCD prevention efforts.

Strengthen efforts to create healthy environments and public spaces, and promote outdoor recreation in healthy settings.

Activities



The activities of Wellness Week will be interactive, meaningful, fun and informative, and will take place both in person and online. Some examples include:

- Health promotion campaigns on public transportation networks.
- Walks and marathons.
- Hiking and biking races using bike pathways or routes suitable for this purpose.
- Health fairs in schools, workplaces and communities.
- Healthy cooking classes.
- Meetings and information forums (in person and online).
- Seminars and other academic events.
- Farmers' markets.
- Activities in schools, universities and municipalities.
- Incentives for healthy business and healthy workplace competitions and awards for successful experiences.

