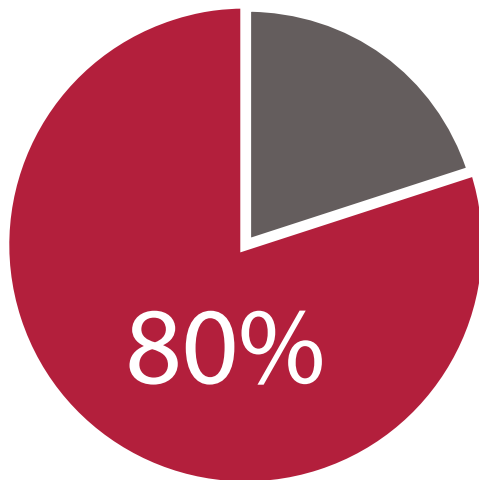


The Power of Lifestyle

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.



Once you become an adult, 80 percent of your health is determined by lifestyle, the other 20 percent is determined by genetics, environment and medical care, according to the MacArthur Foundation Select Panel on Healthy Aging.

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.

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!"