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workplace health promotion: pre-planning series



Programme Orientation

Understanding Workplace Health Promotion

Updated Version 2

KEY CONCEPTS

- Components of a workplace health promotion programme
- Rationale for a workplace health promotion programme
 - Health and three broad ways to influence health

A note for you

– The Workplace Health Manager...

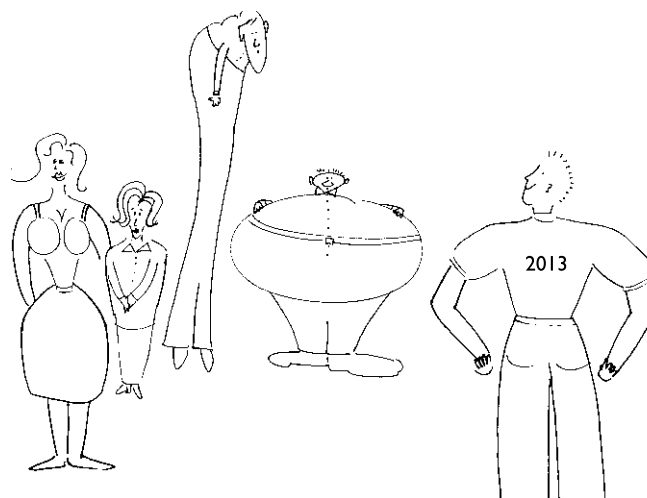
Dedicated to workplace health managers
for their relentless efforts,
tireless commitment and
indomitable spirit.

Your role is a critical one because you have the opportunity to bring about changes that can impact your colleagues' health.

Though your role differs from company to company, you are generally tasked to plan, organise and implement a workplace health promotion (WHP) programme.

While you do not need to be an expert on health issues or be medically trained, some basic understanding of health, the factors that influence it, concepts of WHP and what can be achieved will definitely help you in your task.

This guide will support your role as a workplace health manager, and enable you to plan effectively. To find out on the latest news and events, visit HPB's one-stop on-line portal for workplace health managers at www.hpb.gov.sg/healthatwork. If you need further assistance, please e-mail to Workplace Health at HPB_HEALTH_At_Work@hpb.gov.sg or call 64353704.



Workplace health promotion begins with you, you & YOU...

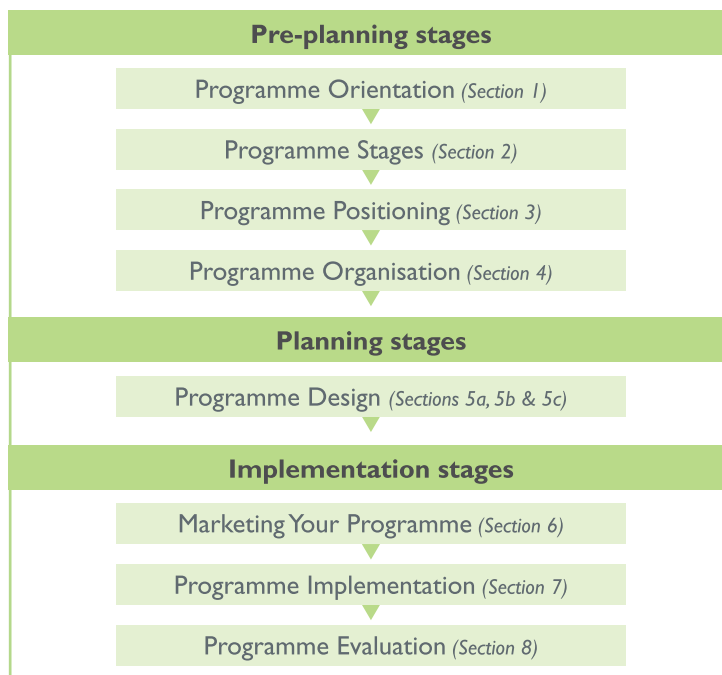
Introduction

The *Essential Guide to Workplace Health Promotion: The ABCs of Managing Your Organisation's Programme* consists of eight Sections, grouped into three series of Pre-planning, Planning and Implementation. This form of organisation mirrors the actual stages of WHP programme planning and implementation.

At different points in each Section, there will be cross-references in italics. This is intended to improve understanding of the inter-relationships between different concepts in different sections.

In these Sections, you will find:

- concise flow charts
- clear definitions
- simple explanations
- essential survival tips
- useful examples
- helpful checklists
- ready-to-print templates.



icons



Ideas you can apply



Technical information



Case studies of companies



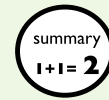
Essential survival tips



Frequently-asked questions



Useful notes

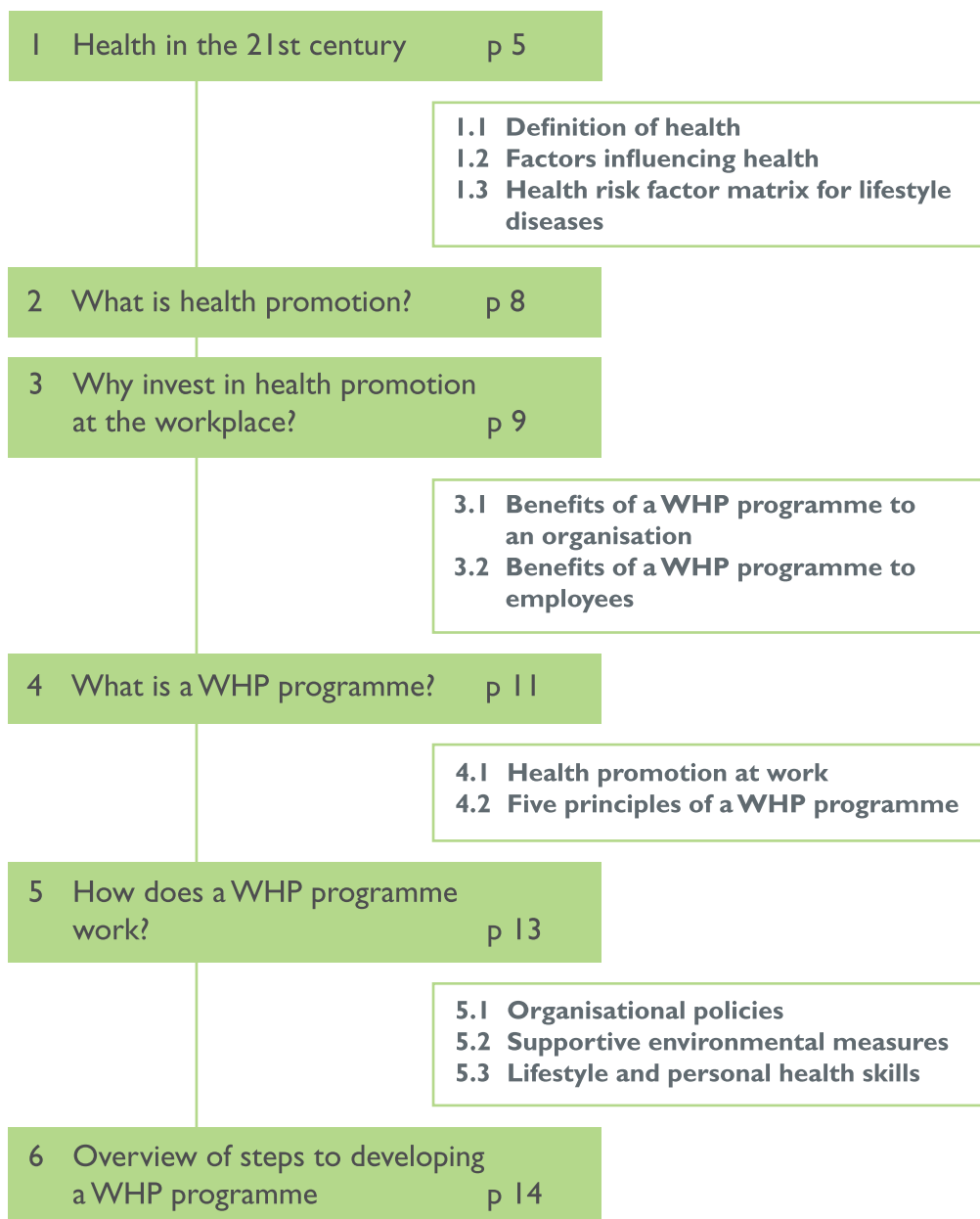


Quick summary

Overview

If your organisation is keen to improve productivity, reduce absenteeism and control healthcare costs, then improving employee health and wellbeing may be your answer. A workplace health promotion (WHP) programme can benefit your organisation.

This Section gives you the rationale and concepts of workplace health promotion, and the steps for implementing a WHP programme.



Health in the 21st century

I Health in the 21st century

I.1 Definition of health

In the past, people looked at health as being free from sickness or disease. Today, the definition of health has changed.

Health has been defined as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.' (World Health Organization, 1946)

Health does not only refer to being physically well, it is also a holistic state of wellness which allows a person to perform at optimal capacity.

Aspects of health	Description
Physical health	Related to health of body; fitness level; adequate nutrition; freedom from sickness
Mental health	Being sound mentally and emotionally; being well-adjusted; experiencing job satisfaction; ability to perform to job demands; low levels of anxiety; absence of depression; positive attitudes towards life and work
Social health	Having positive social influences and support within and outside of work; ability to relate with colleagues, clients, family and peers

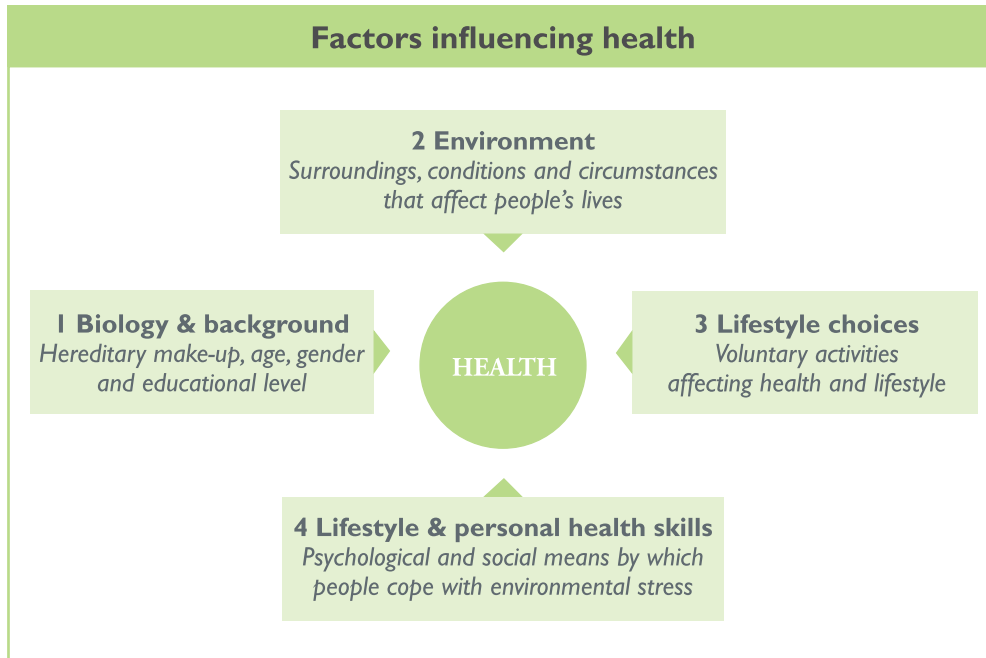
Definitions taken from Merriam Webster's Medical Desk Dictionary, Merriam Webster Inc, Publishers, Springfield, Mass, USA.



Good mental, physical and social health is the key to total well-being.

1.2 Factors influencing health

Your employees' health is affected by four factors.



1.2.1 Health and three broad ways to influence health

Factors 2, 3 and 4 (Environment, Lifestyle choices and Lifestyle and personal health skills) can be modified.

An effective WHP programme acts upon these three areas which influence health – environment, health practices and personal resources.

1.2.2 Interdependence of factors

Factors 2, 3 and 4 are interdependent.

Your company may choose to institute a smoke-free policy (factor 2) which will help improve the physical environment for non-smokers. However, unless smokers are equipped with the necessary personal health skills to manage their unhealthy habit (factor 4), introducing this policy may not result in a lifestyle choice that is pro-health (factor 3).

Therefore, your concern for health in the workplace must take into account the interdependence of factors that affect employees' health.

In the example of the smoke-free policy, the policy could be introduced gradually. The company can limit the areas where smokers smoke, and introduce smoking cessation options to help them curb the habit.

1.3 Health risk factor* matrix for lifestyle diseases

Like other affluent countries, the top three killers in Singapore are cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke. These are broadly related to lifestyle choices that are within our control.

To target these major health problems, you need to know the risk factors that contribute to them. A single risk factor is sometimes linked to more than one health problem.

For example, unhealthy eating and sedentary lifestyle can result in health problems such as high blood cholesterol, hypertension, diabetes and stroke.

Diabetes, hypertension and high blood cholesterol are also risk factors for more complicated health problems such as coronary heart disease and stroke.



		Health risk factor* matrix					
		HEALTH PROBLEMS					
RISK FACTORS		High blood cholesterol	Hypertension	Diabetes	Cancer	Coronary heart disease	Stroke
1	Smoking		•	•	•	•	•
2	Unhealthy eating (high calories/fat, low fibre, high salt)	•	•	•	•	•	•
3	Alcohol use		•		•	•	•
4	Sedentary lifestyle	•	•	•	•	•	•
5	Stress		•			•	•
6	Obesity		•	•	•	•	•
7	High blood cholesterol					•	•
8	Hypertension					•	•
9	Diabetes					•	•
10	Coronary heart disease						•

* Health risk factor: Lifestyle behaviour or environmental factors that cause or are associated with health problems.

What is health promotion?

2 What is health promotion?

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. Health promotion also recognises social and mental wellbeing as part of health.

A conducive environment plays an important role in enabling people to reach a state of optimal health. A conducive environment includes having access to health information, opportunities for making healthy choices, social and cultural environments that are supportive such as access to reasonably-priced healthier food choices.

Thus health promotion involves health education (e.g. talks on health topics), health prevention (e.g. health screening and immunisation) and health protection (e.g. smoke-free policy and healthy environment).



Adapted from Tannahill, *Health Education Journal* 1985; 44:167-8



Traditional vs modern approach in health promotion

Traditional approach

- Aimed at prevention of disease.
- Used negative messages (e.g. quit smoking).
- Emphasised physical aspects of health.
- Directed at individuals.
- Saw individuals as totally responsible for their health behaviour.
- Neglected environmental aspects (e.g. social-cultural environment).

Modern approach

- Aims at enhancing wellbeing as well as prevention of disease (e.g. focuses on primary prevention).
- Uses positive messages (e.g. enjoy a better quality of life).
- Recognises connections between mental, social and physical aspects.
- Focuses on broader base (e.g. values, decision-making skills and self-esteem).
- Recognises that people are not totally free to choose as they experience social pressures and are affected by advertising and addictions.
- Includes environmental aspects (e.g. access to healthier food choices).

Why invest in health promotion at the workplace?

3 Why invest in health promotion at the workplace?

3.1 Benefits of a WHP programme to an organisation

A well-planned WHP programme contributes directly to a company's bottom-line.

Benefits include:

- **Improving:**
 - productivity
 - morale and employee satisfaction
 - staff retention
 - staff cooperation
 - creativity
 - loyalty to company
 - ease of recruitment.

- **Reducing:**
 - medical leave
 - staff turnover, and therefore lower recruitment and training costs
 - workplace injuries and accidents
 - work time lost
 - health costs
 - absenteeism
 - presenteeism

(lost productivity due to poorer physical or emotional health of an employee when at work).



Healthy employees are more likely to be productive employees who are essential for successful businesses. Successful companies lay the foundation for a healthy economy and form the basis of sustainable development* in a country.

*Sustainable development: Building healthy public policy and providing supportive environments for health to continually improve living conditions, support healthy lifestyle and increase opportunity for wellbeing.

3.2 Benefits of a WHP programme to employees

Your employees will benefit from a WHP programme as it can bring about:

- healthy behaviour
- improved overall health
- higher job satisfaction
- better job performance.



A national perspective of the need for WHP programme

Demographic and health trends

An aging workforce, the dominance of lifestyle-related diseases and rising healthcare costs – all pose a real threat to a company's productivity and profitability.

A company that builds an effective WHP programme hedges against these threats, and is better positioned to sustain growth and profitability.

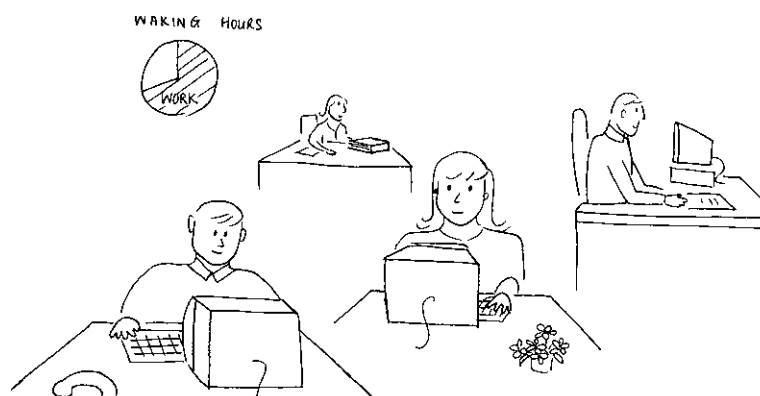
Investment in human capital

In Singapore, optimising the performance and productivity of human capital is critical, given our limited resources. This is especially true in a knowledge economy, where the talent and innovation of an energetic and vibrant workforce are essential.

Investing in the health of employees should be seen as an investment rather than a cost.

Workplace is the ideal setting

More than 60% of Singaporean adults spend at least half of their waking hours at work. The workplace is an ideal setting to promote health, where peer support and communication structures are already in place.



Your workplace provides an excellent platform for health promotion.

What is a WHP programme?

4 What is a WHP programme?

4.1 Health promotion at work

A workplace health promotion (WHP) programme is a programme that your company provides *continually* to improve or maintain the health of its employees. The approach is holistic, and includes education, training and sustaining a workplace environment that promotes wellbeing.

4.2 Five principles of a WHP programme

A WHP programme should be organised according to these five guiding principles:

Five principles of WHP

- Meets the needs of all employees regardless of their current level of health.
- Recognises that an individual's lifestyle is made up of interdependent set of health habits.
- Recognises the unique characteristics of each workplace environment and the needs, preferences and attitudes of different groups of participants.
- Supports the development of a strong overall health policy in the workplace.
- Is well-organised and addresses specific health issues with measurable goals.



Workplace health promotion is:

“ A *continuous* process for the enhancement of the quality of working life, health and wellbeing of all working populations through environmental improvement (physical, psychosocial, organisational, economic), personal empowerment and personal growth. ”

World Health Organization, 1977

Myths and truths about a WHP programme

▶ **Myth: A WHP programme costs a lot of money and time.**

A WHP programme does not cost a lot of money or take up a lot of time. A WHP programme does not need to be elaborate or expensive. Comprehensive, effective programmes can be run at low-cost using creative methods (see Section 5b: Choosing Interventions).

▶ **Myth: A WHP programme must be run by health experts.**

A WHP programme does not need to be run by experts to be successful. Effective programmes can be, and are often planned and managed by staff members that have received training in workplace health promotion. When necessary, professional help can be sought from service providers.

▶ **Myth: Running a WHP programme requires space within the company.**

A WHP programme does not need to be carried out on the company premises. It can also be done out of the company premises. Employees can also exercise at their leisure time and at any location of their convenience (see Section 7: Programme Implementation).

▶ **Myth: A WHP programme is about exercise classes and health talks.**

A WHP programme does not consist only of exercise classes or health talks. Equipping employees with skills for a healthier lifestyle is also important. Changes to organisational policies and environment are also components of an effective WHP programme. Besides promoting physical activity, other key health behaviours to be advocated include healthy eating, smoking control and mental wellbeing.

▶ **Myth: Participation rate in WHP programme is the only indicator of success.**

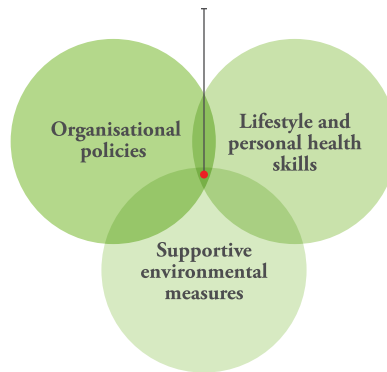
Participation rate is not the only indicator of a successful WHP programme. A well-planned WHP programme has specific goals to measure the success of the programme.

How does a WHP programme work?

5 How does a WHP programme work?

An effective WHP programme uses a combination of organisational policies, environmental interventions and lifestyle and personal health skills to influence employees' health.

WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION



5.1 Organisational policies

The company can support health promotion in the form of policies, statements, procedures and visible management backing.

Examples include:

- Health-related policies such as healthy workplace nutrition policy, healthy workplace catering policy and smoke-free workplace policy
- Health-linked policies such as family-friendly policies, policy on internal communication, workload distribution, management and accountability
- Links to occupational safety and health policies. (see Section 5b: Choosing Interventions)

5.2 Supportive environmental measures

5.2.1 Social/organisational environment

A supportive social environment is critical for health promotion. This comprises an organisational culture of empowerment, trust, care and respect and the shared beliefs which employees identify with.

Examples include: recognition for participation in WHP programme, having clear channels of communication, having clear workload distribution and accountability, and having management practices which reduce the sources of organisational stress.

5.2.2 Physical environment

Facilities can reinforce or enhance the programme.

Examples: water coolers, gym or access to sports facilities, canteen that serves healthy food, childcare services and vending machines with healthier snacks.

5.2.3 Access to health promotion in clinical services

A company's medical centre/services should move beyond providing only clinical and curative health services, to focusing on health promotion as well.

5.3 Lifestyle and personal health skills

Information or training should be provided to enable employees to adopt healthy behaviours.

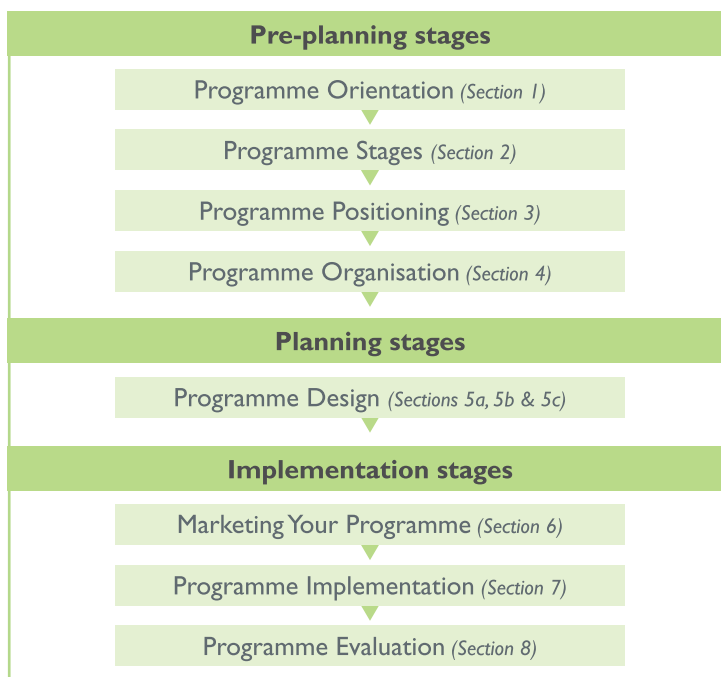
Examples include: talks, workshops, counselling sessions, contests, competitions and exhibitions on health issues and skills to control weight gain and quit smoking.

6 Overview of steps to developing a WHP programme

A WHP programme will be effective if it is strategically positioned and well-organised. It also needs to be systematically planned, implemented and evaluated.

A WHP programme should be set in place in stages at your own pace, and according to the resources available.

The specifics of each stage are set out in detail in the other sections of this guide.



Developing a WHP programme



Developing a WHP programme

Stages	Tasks
Pre-planning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding WHP programme ▶ Charting direction ▶ Securing management support ▶ Setting up a committee structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with concepts of health and WHP. • Identify current stage of the programme. • Chart future directions through self-evaluation. • Present business case for WHP programme to management. • Follow-up. • Identify a relevant structure. • Identify a champion from senior management. • Identify your human resources. • Gain commitment. • Establish schedules and systems. • Conduct first meeting.
Planning	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Designing your WHP programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assessing needs – Choosing interventions – Developing a programme plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a mental picture of health needs. • Collect data. • Analyse findings. • Determine priorities. • Keep stakeholders informed. • Plan your interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Types of interventions: organisational policies, supportive environmental measures and lifestyle and personal health skills – Mass vs targeted interventions. • Formulate goals based on needs assessment. • Set objectives. • Select interventions. • Set process, impact and outcome objectives. • Develop an evaluation plan.
Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Marketing your programme ▶ Implementing your programme ▶ Evaluating your programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). • Choose an appropriate strategy, bearing in mind the 5Ps of marketing (product, people, promotion, place and price). • Carry out your programme plan. • Consider practical implications. • Be clear of the goals, and process and impact objectives. • Decide on the types of evaluation required. • Collect data. • Analyse and interpret data. • Write report recommending improvements. • Renew and expand your WHP programme.