



For immediate release
1st March 2007

HALF OF UK WORKFORCE 'WORK IN AN UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENT'

With 95% of people admitting they struggle into work when ill, it is easy to see why 51% of people consider their workplace an unhealthy environment. With all these germs around as well as long hours and increasing stress, it's understandable that 42% of UK workers hold the workplace directly responsible for the majority of their illnesses.

However, the survey¹, conducted by Yakult, suggests that many people may be misinformed, with 41% believing that if a colleague had a cold, they were almost bound to catch it. With so many people believing that colds are inevitable, it's understandable that only 21% of people took active measures to protect themselves.

Professor Ron Eccles, director of the Common Cold Centre at Cardiff University, explains: *"With so many people going to work when ill, it is inevitable that many of us will come into contact with germs during the working day. The key to strengthening our bodies against attack lies within our immune system – a network of cells, tissues and organs that protects us against germs and harmful microorganisms. The majority of this system lies within our gut, so looking after your digestive system with diet, exercise and a healthy lifestyle is vital for stronger natural defences. However, employers also have a duty of care, and if more workplaces were to take active steps to maintain the health of their workforce, I believe we would see far fewer instances of colds and flu".*

Thankfully, many workplaces around the UK are recognising the importance of proactively contributing to employee health, with initiatives such as free fruit, gym membership, relaxation areas, office décor, yoga classes or social events. To reward those organisations that are actively investing in employee health, Yakult the probiotic expert, is launching the 'Yakult Healthy Workplace Awards'. The Awards scheme is open to any organisation within the UK that believes it has a healthy attitude to employee health – and both employers and employees are eligible to nominate. The winning

¹ Survey of 1,150 working adults, conducted by tickbox.net, Feb 2007.

'Healthiest Workplace' will be rewarded with a trip to Japan, the birthplace of Yakult. To nominate, simply visit www.healthyworkawards.co.uk

Professor Eccles's top tips for a healthier workplace:

1. Germ warfare
 - Wash all crockery and cutlery in hot water after use, and don't share these with colleagues
 - Keep wipes on your desk to clean hands, phone, keyboard and surfaces – these can all spread germs
 - Use hygienic paper towels in toilets and dry your hands properly as damp hands transmit more germs than dry hands
2. Eat yourself well
 - Eat a good selection of fruit and vegetables to ensure you get plenty of vitamins - and aim to drink eight to ten glasses of water each day
 - Take a daily probiotic like Yakult – they support the body's natural defences by contributing to a well balanced gut flora through an increased number of beneficial bacteria
3. Keep Fighting Fit
 - Keep the blood moving around your body. Try placing everyday objects such as staplers away from your desk so you have to stand to reach them
 - Take a break and walk round the office to alleviate the fatigue of sitting at your desk for long periods
 - Set up an office walking club or sports team
4. Work and Play
 - Try to relax and not over-react to office problems. Stress lowers resistance to infection
 - Get a good night's sleep as part of a healthy lifestyle
 - Try to ensure there is a healthy work / life balance
5. Healthy surroundings
 - Turn off the air-con and which can spread germs, and open the window
 - Make a 'health drawer' which can contain non-perishable snacks e.g. dried fruit, and sanitizing wipes for when colleagues have colds, and perhaps a pair of trainers for a brisk lunchtime walk
 - Add plants to your workspace. This can actually improve the air quality in the office, as well as adding to your over-all sense of well-being
6. And if you do catch a cold:
 - Be prepared - always carry tissues not hankies
 - Cover your sneeze properly with a disposable tissue then dispose of the tissue in the bin
 - If you have no tissues, learn to sneeze into the inside of your elbow instead of your hand. That way you won't share your sneezes with others when you pass paperwork along or shake hands

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Notes to editors

Yakult

- Yakult is the original probiotic. It was developed in 1935 by Dr Shirota, at Kyoto University in Japan.
- Dr Shirota was a powerful advocate of preventative medicine. He believed healthy intestines helped give good health and a long life. His philosophy – *Working on a healthy society* – aims to improve physical, mental and social health.
- Yakult has almost 75 years in bacteriological research and has achieved global recognition in the use of friendly bacteria in foods, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals. Research continues at the Yakult Central Institute in Japan and the company also works closely with scientific and medical communities to increase understanding of the role of friendly bacteria in health.
- Today Yakult is consumed by 25 million people in 28 countries world-wide.