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Redefining wealth through health and wellness

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WS Global CIO Office



The link between longevity, mental health and wealth outcomes has become clearer than ever before. Most investors focus solely on financial aspects, but studies suggest that a holistic approach, combining financial resilience, environmental harmony and physical/mental well-being, allows investors to build wealth that supports sustained, long-term success.

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Global Chief Investment Officer

This report explores the nuances of holistic, health- and wellness-centred wealth management and financial planning, including how these elements can be woven into wealth goals and the emerging trends shaping this approach.

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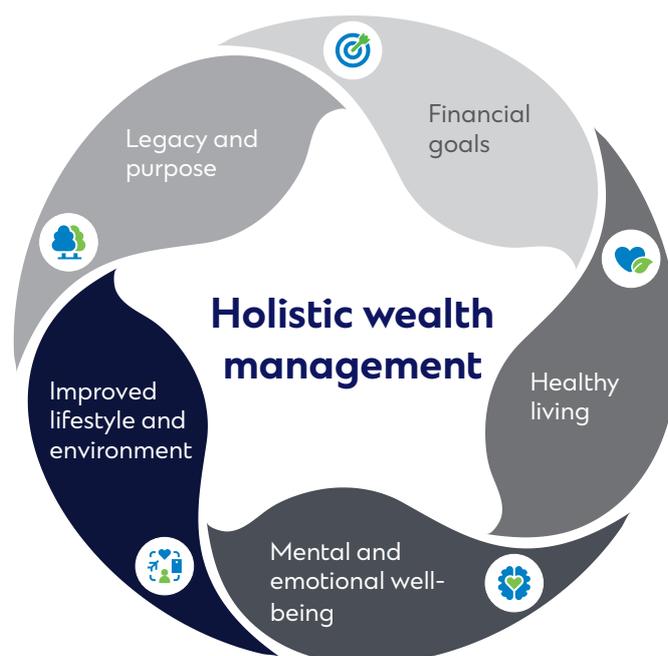
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Understanding holistic wealth management

Holistic wealth management is more than just portfolio performance and asset growth. It focuses on an investor's overall well-being by integrating financial health with physical, mental and emotional wellness.

This integrated approach ensures your wealth journey will not only support your financial aspirations but will also ensure you lead a fulfilling, resilient and purpose-driven life. This approach incorporates:

- **Comprehensive healthcare cost planning**, including emergency funds, insurance, long-term care considerations and medical directives
- **Stress-aware financial planning** that accounts for emotional triggers and behavioural biases (guardrails) while incorporating a structured decision-making framework that supports bias-free investing and ensures adequate risk preparedness
- **Preventive health strategies** and longevity planning
- Access to wellness services and **wellness-centric living environments** to support healthier lifestyles
- Wealth decisions aligned with **personal lifestyle goals**, including eco-conscious living, cross-border investing and travel
- **Family harmony and communication frameworks** for estate planning and business succession

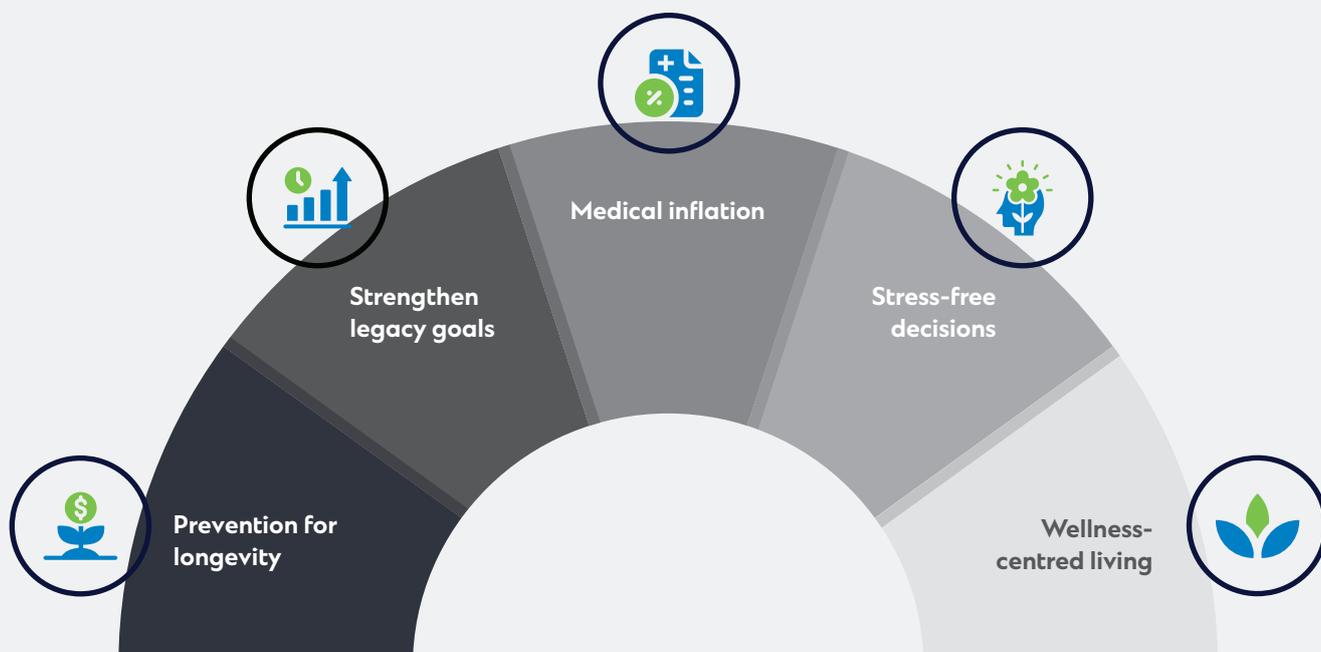


Source: Standard Chartered

Importance of health and wellness in wealth strategy

Wealth strategies that overlook health and well-being can often invite several challenges. For instance, an investor's long-term financial goals could be derailed if a sudden illness or unexpected medical emergency leads to a loss of income.

Why integrate health and wellness into financial decision-making?



Source: Standard Chartered

There are several strong reasons to include health and wellness as part of your broader wealth management strategy:

Healthcare costs are unpredictable, inflationary and rising

According to WTW's 2026 Global Medical Trends Survey Report, medical costs rose by 10.4% in 2025, continuing a double-digit trend. A majority of global insurers expect medical costs to trend higher over the next three years. Moreover, public healthcare systems are overwhelmed, necessitating investors to avail private insurance to lower out-of-pocket expenses. Unexpected medical events can erode your savings, weaken your long-term wealth strategy or trigger debt.

Mental and emotional health swings can influence financial decisions

Nearly 90% of our financial decisions are based on emotions. Studies further indicate that analytical capabilities get compromised when an individual is emotionally distressed or cognitively overwhelmed. This could trigger impulsive financial decisions, overreaction to market swings, panic selling, timing mistakes and overspending. Many investors experience intense performance pressure, owing to the responsibility of managing family wealth and burnout from work or business obligations, leading to cognitive overload and emotional distress.

Preventive health measures can influence longevity and health spans

Early screenings, vaccinations and proactive stress management shape longevity and health spans. An American College of Cardiology study found that individuals who followed healthy lifestyle and dietary habits had about a 90% lower risk of heart attacks and around a 75% lower risk of developing type-2 diabetes. Investors are turning to personalised biomarker panels and digital wellness gadgets/platforms as part of preventive health measures. In essence, preventive healthcare not only helps avoid disease but also protects 'human capital' and extends wealth accumulation years.



Strategies to integrate health planning into wealth management

Several studies have found that emotionally resilient individuals – often built through proactive stress management – engaged more in multi-generational financial discussions. The Milken Institute also noted that wealthy individuals who prioritised preventive healthcare not only had a better quality of life but also bolstered their wealth journey.

Investors who track their wellness metrics are more likely to stay invested in long-range financial plans. Here are some key strategies that investors can consider:

Health emergency buffers

Health emergency buffers act as a bridge between medical care and wealth by creating liquid capital that helps investors stay resilient during health shocks without compromising on long-term financial objectives. Preparedness for unforeseen medical events can prevent spirals of anxiety or forced portfolio liquidation. The need for sufficient healthcare emergency funds is also necessitated by the public healthcare systems being overwhelmed and exposing investors to such systems strain. In Asia, out-of-pocket spending remains elevated, and households shoulder around 40% of total health expenditure. A single medical emergency could disproportionately slow down wealth accumulation.

Insurance

A financial arrangement where you pay a premium to an insurer in exchange for protection against specific losses, is a common risk-transfer tool. Global premiums were valued over USD 7trn in 2024 across health, life and property and casualty (P&C) insurance. Different types of insurance cater to different risks and life goals:

Health insurance offers protection against any unforeseen medical shocks owing to illness or injury. It generally covers hospitalisation, medical expenses and ongoing treatment, helping individuals avoid out-of-pocket expenses. Health insurance is also a **wealth protection tool**, as it prevents financial shocks, ensures long-term earning capacity and allows disciplined financial planning.

- **International medical insurance** is ideal for globally mobile individuals and families. It provides seamless access to medical care across borders, often including hospitalisation, chronic condition management, emergency services and preventive care.
- **Integrated wellness insurance models** provide support across the entire health continuum – prevention, diagnosis, treatment, after-care and wellness coaching. They offer healthcare coordination, support long-term medical conditions and provide mental and emotional wellness support. These models also offer differentiated services such as priority access to specialists, second-medical-opinion services, personalised case management and high-touch medical concierge support that streamline health journeys and elevate outcomes.

- The health insurance landscape is undergoing a massive shift, with an emphasis on **holistic partnerships** driven by digital health trackers and wellness ecosystems. Many insurers partner with providers of healthtech devices and **wearables** to provide tailored health insights across the entire health lifecycle. In a sense, health insurance is transforming from a reimbursement product into an ongoing, tech-enabled wellness partner. This creates a win-win for both the insurer and insured, reducing premiums for the insured and lowering long-term claims for the insurance companies. Moreover, globally mobile individuals and families can benefit from priority access to global centres of medical excellence and cross-border care coordination.

Traditional health insurance vs integrated wellness insurance

| Aspect | Traditional health insurance | Integrated wellness insurance |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Approach | Reactive, claims driven | Proactive, continuous health management |
| Coverage | Hospitalisation, surgeries, recovery and eligible treatments | Medical cover, preventive care, mental health and after care services |
| Technology integration | Basic telehealth, limited wellness tools | Wearables, health analytics, telehealth and personalised coaching |
| Financial impact | Protects against high medical bills | Reduces long term healthcare costs, lowers claims and improves risk profile |
| Mental well-being support | Usually minimal or limited | Includes mental health and well-being support |
| Ideal for | Standard protection against health risks | Holistic health optimisation and long term well-being |

Source: Standard Chartered

Life insurance hedges life risk. Beyond guaranteed payouts to beneficiaries upon the death of a policyholder, it provides emotional security and reduces anxiety because dependents are protected. Life insurance supports a person's wealth journey by **combining risk protection with disciplined, long-horizon savings**. Several modern-day policies integrate investment-linked solutions with protection to help investors accumulate wealth, while securing guaranteed benefits for their families. Life insurance solutions are also valuable tools in **estate planning**; they provide liquidity to cover for taxes and debt without the need to liquidate estate.

Property and casualty (P&C) insurance protects assets (property) and covers against liabilities (casualty), reducing anxiety and creating a 'peace-of-mind' effect. Although P&C insurance is often seen only as a basic protection tool, it is a critical health and wealth preservation technique. It **shields your assets, including houses and businesses**, from losses that can wipe out years of savings and derail long-term plans. With small, predictable premium payments, unpredictable, high-loss events can be hedged to support stable cash flow and long-term wealth preservation.

Insurance, in any form, reduces volatility and improves investors' financial resilience.

Preventive health strategies

Preventive health strategies can mitigate health risks while also reframing the approach to wealth. A McKinsey Health Institute paper found that investors who consider proactive wellness and health strategies tend to be more confident in financial/legacy planning:

- Advanced technologies such as predictive analytics, next-gen genomic sequencing and IoT-enabled wearables are leading the transformation **from a reactive to a proactive** approach towards healthcare. **Genomic testing** identifies health risks and predicts disease likelihood, guiding early diagnosis. **Wearables** deliver real-time data for continuous monitoring, early detection and personalised preventive care. These approaches can support precision medicine, better physical activity, cardiovascular health and diabetes management.
- Organisations are including **preventive programmes** as they can reduce healthcare costs and claims significantly. For example, Cleveland Clinic's employee wellness initiative saved its healthcare system approximately USD 180m by enabling employees to reach eight preventive health targets (including stress management, healthy BMI and annual primary-care visits). Savings free up more capital for long-term goals such as retirement and investments.
- Proactive health and wellness strategies help to protect the primary wealth engine, i.e., **human capital**. The Cleveland Clinic study also showed that healthy individuals could reduce their chronic-disease risk by nearly 90% through preventive strategies, thereby strengthening their long-term capacity to work. **Career longevity** could translate to higher earnings and preserve income streams.
- With reduced risk profiles owing to preventive care, investors generally pay lower premiums and premium increases are slower. A study indicated that individuals under preventive care programmes are able to reduce premiums roughly worth USD 1,600 per family. This **reduced cash outflow** helps households maintain steady investing habits.





Wellness-centred living

Wellness-centred living refers to homes, communities and neighbourhoods that are intentionally designed to support physical, mental and emotional well-being. **Clean air, natural light, low toxicity and noise, and an active lifestyle** are some key features of such health environments. The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) identifies wellness-centred communities as the next frontier of growth for the wellness industry. Wellness real estate has been growing at 19.5% annually, nearly 4x faster than traditional real estate.

GWI assessed clinical and building-environment data and found that improved health environments contributed to better health outcomes. Buyers are increasingly seeking **sustainable and health-forward environments**, a trend that supports premium willingness-to-pay for homes with superior air quality, natural light and biophilic design. Growing buyer preference, faster absorption and category outperformance indicate that wellness properties tend to hold value better and have better liquidity than traditional properties.

It's time for an integrated approach

All the available data points to the fact that investors are increasingly recognising health and wellness as key components of holistic wealth management. This has resulted in systemic shifts in the financial planning and investing landscape. Homes with clear air, natural light, low toxicity and green access are being pursued for their potential to contribute to overall wellness and financial stability. Insurance is seeing an evident shift from being a claims-driven coverage to offering preventive care, mental and emotional support, telemedicine access and health analytics, which enables tailored advice and risk management. Wearables and real time health data are helping improve investors' overall well-being and financial behaviour.

As the link between wealth and health strengthens, investors who follow a holistic and integrated approach are likely to build the most resilient portfolios.



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