



Health & Wellness Newsletter

July 2008

Welcome to your online Health & Wellness Newsletter, where you're kept up to date with the latest news and views to improve your health. Whether you need to boost your body or free your mind, we've got something for you!

July 2008 Health Calendar



Mental Illness Awareness Month

The month of July has been declared Mental Health Awareness month with the objective of not only educating the public about mental health but also to reduce the stigma and discrimination that people with mental illness are often subjected to.

Exercise depression away

Depression can be one of the most debilitating experiences in life. It makes you tired. The last thing you will feel like doing is exercising. But exercising will make a huge difference to your health.

Contacting your EAP provider should always be your first step in dealing with depression, but there are some ways you can deal with depression on a daily basis. Though it may seem impossible, exercise is one of the best ways to deal with depression.

Exercise and Depression

Depression is one of the most common problems people experience today, but it's also very treatable with medication, therapy and other self-help options. But, have you ever considered exercise as part of your treatment? Study after study has shown that exercise is a helpful way to treat depression because it:

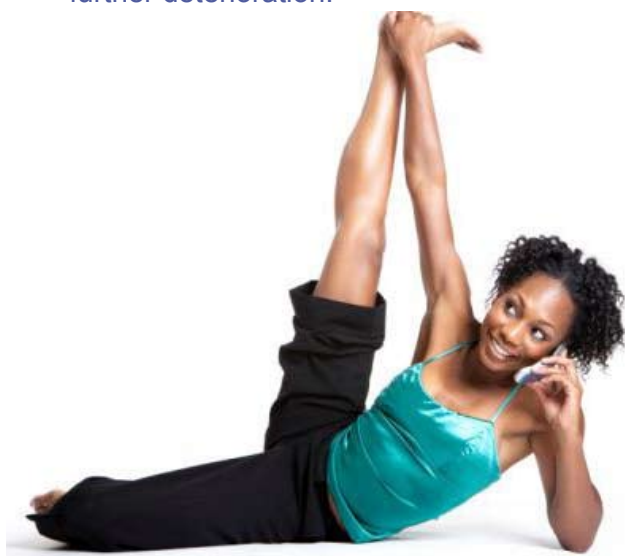
- Increases your sense of mastery which can help for people who don't feel in control of their lives and moods
- Increases self-esteem
- Provides a distraction from your worries
- Improves your health and body, which can help lift your mood
- Helps you get rid of built-up stress and frustration
- Helps you sleep better, which can often be a problem when you're depressed



It may seem impossible to get moving when you feel depressed but that's exactly what will help you. Speak to your doctor before starting an exercise programme.

Stay mentally healthy

Suffering from stress or a low mood? Take a look at how you can boost your mental health. Many of us experience mental health problems – in some countries, like the UK, anxiety and depression have overtaken back pain as the number one cause of absence from work. It's vital that everyone experiencing symptoms of stress or low mood seek help quickly to prevent any further deterioration.



5 Ways to stay mentally healthy

1. Get active! There is no better way to lift low mood than exercise. Any moderate to vigorous activity can enhance general well-being. Try dancing, walking, cycling. Don't forget to eat well and drink lots of water too!
2. Sing your heart out! Recent research has shown that singing a favourite upbeat song increases positive states of mind.
3. Get the balance right. It has been proven many times that people with a reasonable work – life balance tend to be happier and healthier.
4. Let go! People who live "in the moment" not in the past are mentally more alert and relaxed. Try yoga or Tai Chi.
5. Volunteer. Get the "feel good factor" – give to others – get involved in charitable causes.

Marriage and Money

Now is the time to be completely honest with your partner. Don't hide your debt and don't pretend you have different spending patterns than you do. Like everything in your marriage, money should be a partnership.

With your wedding arrangements, include an appointment with your lawyer to have a proper pre-nuptial agreement drawn up. That way, finances will not become buried beneath the tulle and the trappings and possible heartache may be avoided later on.

Ask your lawyer to explain what will happen to you financially in the event of death, divorce or bankruptcy and to advise you on whether to get married:

- In community of property, which means that both your and your partner's finances and possessions will automatically be pooled and be divided equally in the event of a divorce
- Out of community of property without accrual, which means that you each keep what is yours before marriage and, if one partner becomes wealthy during the marriage, the wealth does not have to be shared with the other partner
- Out of community of property with accrual means that each partner keeps what is theirs before marriage, but what is accumulated during the marriage is shared should the marriage not work out

If you get married without an agreement you will automatically be married in community of property.

Before tying the knot, find out if your partner is responsible with money or not. This is not being materialistic; it's being practical. You don't want to be held responsible for his or her debts.



Managing your debt



One of the easiest ways to get your money situation sorted is to settle your debt. Remember, debt can be good if you buy the right thing and control it. Don't let debt control you.

Pay off debt or save?

As a rule, it makes good financial sense to pay back your loans as fast as possible before you start saving - particularly if you have high interest

debt, like hire purchase or credit cards. This is because usually you pay more interest on a loan than the interest you earn on savings.

However, there are also good reasons to do both - pay off debt as fast as possible and start a savings programme at the same time.

Consolidate your debts to save money

Credit cards have higher interest than a bond, for example! Think about consolidating your debts onto your lower interest bond. Pay off loans as fast as you can. Paying off your bond or student loan as fast as you can is a great financial decision, as even a small increase in repayments can greatly reduce the amount of interest you end up paying.

Have an emergency fund

It's common sense to have a cushion for financial emergencies. This is an amount of money you can call on if the unexpected happens. It means you won't have to borrow money or be left financially vulnerable. Decide a reasonable amount (three or four months' income is a good start), balance it with insurance protection against unexpected events and get saving.

Getting into the "savings habit"

If you would like to get into the habit of saving, you could consider starting a small retirement savings scheme while you're still paying off a loan (such as your bond). You'll get into the habit of saving and start to build a small nest egg. You'll also start to build your knowledge of savings and investment options, so that you're better prepared when you want to start serious saving.

The dangers of renewing or extending debt

While it might be good financial logic to pay off your bond before you start serious saving, some people fall into the bond trap and never start saving.

Pyjama drill: will you ever sleep again?



Within a few days of your newborn baby coming home, you will realise that babies' sleep patterns are very different from those of adults - and you may wonder if you will ever have a decent night's sleep again.

A newborn baby usually sleeps for more than 12 hours a day, often in cycles of three to four hours, before waking, feeding and falling asleep again. For the average baby, this means waking up and needing feeding and a nappy change two to three times a night. Much of this sleep is light, active sleep, with dreams, twitching and irregular breathing.

The average baby will sleep for longer periods and stay awake for longer periods within a few weeks. By the age of two months, baby may be sleeping for 6-10 hours at a stretch, with only a few brief awakenings during the night. However, baby is not likely to sleep through the night for several months after birth.

Food Fact:

There is more fiber in an orange than in most other fruits and veggies!



Tempting the fussy eater



Children often take the food habits and attitudes they form during the pre-school years into adulthood. The pre-school years are thus an excellent time to teach children healthy eating habits.

Practical suggestions for overcoming finicky eating

- Overcome boredom by moving some meals to the garden, or by going on a picnic.
- Make food interesting by creating shapes such as faces, cars and trains out of meal ingredients.
- Try including a variety of colours and textures in each meal to add interest.
- Children learn from mimicry so set a good example at the table by eating healthily.
- Encourage regular meal and snack times. Children respond well to routine.

Heart Health Quiz

- 1) How many times does the average human heart beat in a day? **A.** 1,000 **B.** 10,000 **C.** 100,000 **D.** 1,000,000
- 2) Most people have heard the term 'cardiovascular disease' or CVD. But what does it actually mean? **A.** it just means having a heart attack **B.** it means having a stroke **C.** it means any illness to do with the heart and blood vessels **D.** it means either a heart attack or angina
- 3) The direct cause of a heart attack is? **A.** high blood pressure **B.** high cholesterol **C.** a blockage in an artery **D.** the heart just stops beating
- 4) How much more likely are physically active people to survive a heart attack and people who are sedentary? **A.** it doesn't make any difference **B.** 25 per cent more likely **C.** twice as likely **D.** five times as likely
- 5) Which of the following physical activities is best for a healthy heart? **A.** yoga **B.** press-ups **C.** tai chi **D.** swimming



1-c, 2-c, 3-c, 4-c, 5-d

When it's more than forgetting

Dementia is a group of symptoms that is caused by changes in brain functioning and that seriously affects a person's ability to carry out daily activities. The most common form of dementia among older people is Alzheimer's disease (AD), which causes healthy brain tissue to degenerate in the parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language. The exact causes of AD are unknown, and at the moment there is no cure.

Although there is no cure, scientists are making progress. They have developed treatments that improve the quality of life for some of those with the disease, and have identified several genes that may be associated with AD. This may lead to new treatments to prevent the disease from progressing.

While we are still unable to stop the disease from progressing or cure it completely, people with Alzheimer's need support and care from friends and family.