

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Page 1

March 2009

Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

March's Chat Topic

March 18, 2009

Internet Etiquette:
Appropriate Communication
in the Work Place

Every month you'll have an opportunity to chat online with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 6:00 PM to 6:30 PM CST.

March 2009 At A Glance

American Red Cross Month
<http://www.redcross.org/>

Brain Injury Awareness
Month
<http://www.biausa.org/>

National Colorectal
Awareness Month
<http://www.preventcancer.org/colorectal>

Developmental Disabilities
Awareness Month
<http://www.thearc.org/>

National Nutrition Month
<http://www.eatright.org/>

American Red Cross Month
<http://www.redcross.org/>

National Poison Prevention
Month
<http://www.poisonprevention.org/>

Save Your Vision Month
<http://www.aoanet.org/>

Source: 2008 National Health Observances, National Health Information Center, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC.



Featured Article

Insomnia and Its Treatment

Insomnia, which is Latin for "no sleep," can mean difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or simply not feeling refreshed enough following sleep. Insomnia is the most common sleep-related complaint among Americans. It can be acute (trouble sleeping for only a few days) or chronic (symptoms last longer than a month). In a given year, 30-40% of adults report having acute insomnia, while 10-15% experience chronic bouts. Women report more episodes of insomnia, which may be related to the additional physical stressors of menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause. Your risk for insomnia increases with age.

Insomnia can be a disorder on its own, but more often is a symptom of another disease or condition. A common cause is stress, brought on by life events such as the loss of a loved one, layoff from a job, relationship problems, or a traumatic event. Anticipation of positive things can even affect sleep, so you may have insomnia in the weeks preceding a wedding, vacation, or holiday break. Insomnia can occur with jet lag, shift work and other major schedule changes. Sometimes insomnia is caused by pain, digestive difficulties, or a sleep disorder. Insomnia is often a symptom of depression or anxiety.

It is very important to determine the cause of insomnia. First, your physician will design treatment options around the cause of the problem. Secondly, he or she will know that insomnia may be worsening your underlying condition by leaving you tired, less able to cope, and possibly thinking less clearly. After you schedule a doctor appointment, keep a sleep diary (you can download one here: http://www.pcca.net/sleep_diary.pdf). In this way, you will have more information at the time of your appointment.

Insomnia is very treatable! Options include cognitive and behavioral therapies (changing your thoughts and actions around sleep), stimulus control (making changes so your body learns that the bedroom is associated with only sleep and sex), relaxation training, and medication.

For more information, visit the National Sleep Foundation website at: www.sleepfoundation.org

**eatTM
right.**

American Dietetic Association

National Nutrition Month
March 2009

National Nutrition Month[®] is a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the American Dietetic Association. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact your EAP, Deer Oaks at:

1-866-327-2400

eap@deeroaks.com

www.deeroaks.com

Eating Right on a Budget

Eating healthier does not have to be expensive, honest! Try these hints for stretching your dollars:

1. Practice wise shopping behaviors. First, plan a week's worth of healthy meals before going to the store. With a list, you are less likely to be tempted by unnecessary or unhealthy items. Research consistently shows that shoppers without a list buy more snacks! Before you go, check the ads and compare prices. Clip coupons and use them! Avoid going to the grocery store hungry. You will be less tempted by impulse buys and snack foods when you have a full stomach. Be selective in what you buy that is off-season. For example, the price of strawberries and peaches will vary widely throughout the year, while apples, bananas, and oranges tend to stay relatively lower-priced across seasons.



2. Check foods' expiration dates. Meats and dairy products especially can have expiration dates that are soon. If the meal is close on your schedule, you may save money by buying these items because they may be on sale. However, don't waste your money on something you won't use. If the price is the same, reach in the back and look for a newer product.

3. Visit your local farmers market when fresh produce is in season near you. Farmers Market food, because it often comes from local growers, may be a little cheaper and a lot fresher! Farmers markets may also be a good source of less-expensive organic produce.

4. Learn to freeze and can fresh food for later use. You will typically have more nutrients and less unwanted salt than buying frozen and canned food.

5. Properly store produce and stop throwing away rotten food! Here is an excellent guide to get you started: http://www.vegetariantimes.com/resources/produce_storage_guide/.

6. Buy food in bulk, split into parts, and store some for later. Just don't get caught up in buying more than you would have needed anyway. An alternative is to share the cost with a friend or family member. Whatever you do, make sure you label items well and include the date.

7. Use less expensive protein. Red meat isn't the only protein available. Try cooking with tofu, beans (black, garbanzo, pinto, or kidney), hummus, nuts, seeds, and peanut butter—all excellent, non-dairy sources of protein. Eggs, cottage cheese, and yogurt are alternative animal-derived sources of protein, as are tuna and other fish.

8. Make bread. A bread-making machine will more than pay for itself if you use it consistently. Your breads and rolls will be far cheaper, and healthier at that!

9. Look for deals on dried fruits. It's an easy way to get your fruit servings in for the day, and sales abound! Just make sure you find the sales because otherwise dried foods can get to be expensive.

In addition to the above ideas, limit how often you dine out, drink alcoholic beverages, and snack on junk food. Your wallet will be bigger rather than your waist-- definitely a better bottom line!

Matters of the Heart

Control Your Anger, Help Your Heart

Here's a hopeful possibility for those who have been diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia. If you gain better control over your anger, you might not need an implanted defibrillator.

That's the hope of a research project headed by Dr. Rachel Lampert, associate Professor of Cardiology and Electrophysiology at Yale University. The theory is based on a phenomenon called T-wave alternans. The T-wave is the last bump in the electrocardiogram (ECG), which records the electrical activity of the heart as it beats. T-wave alternans is a wide variation in the height or regularity of that bump. A number of studies have linked T-wave alternans to the risk of a potentially fatal heart arrhythmia that can be prevented by implanting a defibrillator, which delivers jolts of electricity to keep the heart beating regularly.

T-wave alternans can be detected by a physical stress test. A report by Lampert in the March 3 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* on 62 people with implanted defibrillators widened that finding by having them take a mental stress test, something as simple as remembering a recent situation in which they were angered or aggravated. Over the next 3 years, 16% of the participants experienced arrhythmias that set off their implanted defibrillators, and they were found to have higher T-wave alternans than those who did not have arrhythmias.

"One implication of our study is that the changes in the ECG you see with anger are what you see in a stress test," Lampert said. "Is the anger test as good as a stress test? This suggests that it is." The study also helps show why anger can lead to sudden death, she said. "Feeling angry can bring on arrhythmias," Lampert said. "It shows what anger does to the heart electrical system. In the laboratory, anger is predictive of having arrhythmias in the future." It's possible that an anger test can be as predictive of future as a physical stress test, she said, "but it is too early to say we can implant a defibrillator on the basis of T-wave alternans."

And because the study indicates that anger can cause electrical instability of the heart, "it suggests that interventions aimed at controlling anger could be an effective way to decrease arrhythmias," Lampert said. That belief is being tested by a 5-year study that has begun at Yale. "We take people who have defibrillators, measure their T-wave alternans, and enroll them in [an anger] self-control program," she said. "We want to see if we can perhaps improve their quality of life." Meanwhile, some of the principles can be put into real-life practice, she said. "We are thinking about psychological stress management. There are lots of ways people can manage stress in their lives."

An accompanying editorial by Dr. Eric J. Rashba, Professor of Medicine and Director of Electrophysiology at the Heart Center at Stony Brook University Hospital in New York, said that the study results "provide the first evidence that patients with higher levels of anger-induced T-wave alternans during provocative testing are at greater risk for ventricular arrhythmias detectable by implanted cardiac defibrillators." He noted, however, that further studies are needed to prove the value of anger-induced T-wave alternans in predicting the need for implanted defibrillators.

<http://yourtotalhealth.ivillage.com/control-your-anger-help-your-heart.html>

SOURCES: Rachel Lampert, M.D., associate professor of medicine, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.; March 3, 2009, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*