

Healthy U @ Work

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 **Franciscan**
WORKING Well

The Joy of Giving

If you are in the heat of the holiday shopping season with a gift list still not completed, stop! Take a moment and breathe. It's time to pause and consider why we give and how to make it a better experience for everyone.

For most of us, the holiday season is stressful. This stress can lead to a grumpy approach to the rituals and traditions that a holiday brings. Gift giving has been reduced to a quick gift card grab at the grocery store and late nights searching Amazon for an okay gift that will arrive within 2 days. Perhaps that's fun for some, but many of us can think of at least one time we found the perfect gift for an important person in our lives. That feeling is special, and seeing someone open that perfect gift is priceless. This joy of giving is about gifting something that means something. Maybe it represents the relationship or is unique to the recipient. It is certainly not generic, and it doesn't require a high price tag.



Realistically, few of us have the time that it would take to find each person on our list the perfect present. But remembering the goal of giving - to provide someone with something special - is the point. This year, choose one or two people, and spend a little extra time considering what to get and finding it. Realize at the same time, that you are honoring the recipient and yourself. Let yourself enjoy the process. Enjoy slowing down a little. And after this holiday season, see if you can keep your eyes open throughout the year for that special gift to give next year. Happy Holidays!



Safe Toys and Gifts

Tis the season for toys! It's the holiday season, and many gifts will be given! Here are some safety concerns to remember:

Know the age of the child, the child's abilities and maturity.

Toys with small parts should be avoided for all children under the age of 3. This includes toys where small parts can be pulled or broken off (buttons, ribbons, plastic eyes, etc.). To check whether a part is small enough for a child to choke on, try putting it into an empty toilet paper tube. If it fits in the tube, it is too small and should not be given to any child under the age of 3. Avoid toys with button magnets for children under the age of 10. Small magnets can be swallowed and cause serious injury or even death. No latex balloons for children younger than 8 (choking hazard). You can also look for toy recalls at the government website www.recalls.gov.

Many give gifts of food at the holidays. Remember that some food allergies are very serious and can be fatal.

Always label ingredients on the outside of a sealed container. Whenever possible, check with the recipient to see if anyone in the house has a food allergy.

If giving electronics, be aware of age appropriate gadgets, software, and apps.

Include all instructions and a fresh set of batteries if appropriate. It may be a good idea to check with the parent or guardian first.

Produce of the Month Kale

Kale is getting a lot of attention these days and for good reason. It is one of the vegetable superstars, high in vitamins and fiber as well as cancer preventing benefits. Delicious and low in calories, kale is worth adding to your diet.

The Basics: Kale is a cruciferous vegetable, meaning that it is a member of the cabbage family. Known for a deep green color and fibrous leaves, kale should be free of browning or bruising when purchased. It can be stored in the refrigerator for 4-5 days in a plastic bag or airtight container. When ready to prepare, rinse the leaves and remove the stems (if desired). Chop the leaves to help them cook quickly and evenly. You may steam, sauté, braise, or boil kale. It is also a great addition to winter soups. You can also eat kale raw in salads, slaws, and sandwiches.

Try This: Sauté garlic and chopped onion until soft. Add 1 pound of chopped kale and a ½ cup of broth (vegetable, beef or chicken). Cover and cook until the kale has softened (though it won't be as soft as a cooked spinach) and the liquid has absorbed. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle with lemon juice or red wine vinegar before serving. Serves 4.

The Facts: Kale is very low in calories and high in fiber. It is an excellent source of vitamins K, A and C.

Tasty Traditions: Healthy Cooking for the Holidays

Enjoy the holidays and still eat healthy foods? Absolutely!

- If you have a choice of ham or turkey for dinner, choose turkey. Turkey is lower in salt and sugar, and less processed, making it easier to digest.
- Love mashed potatoes and sweet potato casserole? Try substituting mashed cauliflower in place of potatoes for added fiber and nutrients or forgo the mini-marshmallows and serve savory sweet potatoes with onions, fresh sage and grated parmesan cheese to cut back on added sugars.
- No need to skip the cranberries. Packed with antioxidants, cranberries can be added to many dishes, including whole grain bread and muffins, salads, and casseroles. You can make your own cranberry sauce, reducing the sugar and cooking the cranberries in orange juice instead of water for sweetness.
- Make your holiday cookies a little smaller this year. It's an easy way to control your portion size!
- Kids asking for a sweet treat? Dehydrate apples and sprinkle with cinnamon for a healthy snack.
- Instead of serving heavy appetizers like cheese and crackers, keep it light with a fresh veggie tray.
- Dark chocolate is heart healthy! A small square of dark chocolate after a meal can satisfy your sweet tooth without the added sugar and extra calories.
- It's still pumpkin season! Try this healthier version of pumpkin pie that is sure to be a crowd pleaser:



Basic Crustless Pumpkin Pie

- 1 (15-ounce) can pure pumpkin
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 ½ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup evaporated milk

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease an 8-inch springform pan. In a medium bowl, combine pumpkin, sugar, honey, and pumpkin pie spice. Add eggs and vanilla. Beat lightly just until combined. Gradually stir in evaporated milk. Pour in to prepared pan and place on a foil-lined baking sheet.

Bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until center appears set when gently shaken. Cool for 1 hour on a wire rack. Cover with foil and chill for at least 2 hours (or up to 24 hours) before serving.

Picture and recipe borrowed from Diabetic Living Magazine.

Overcoming the Risky Business of Fitness

By LeeAnn Wilcox

A common fear is injuring oneself during exercise. You can prevent injury and exercise confidently when you adopt [the 4 pillars of a healthy training program](#):

- 1 Rest:** Make sure to give yourself at least one day of rest a week. Working the body every single day (especially the same muscle groups) doesn't give your muscles time to heal and recover, which is necessary for them to grow stronger. Remember a rest day doesn't mean a cheat day, you can stretch, stay hydrated and eat well to help your body heal.
- 2 Cross Training and Variation:** Doing the same exercise over and over in the exact same way isn't going to give you the best results. Switching up how you move will not only improve your overall fitness level, it will help prevent an overuse injury and even reduce the possibility of future boredom. For example, if you walk 5 days a week now, try walking for 3 days and cycling or swimming on the other 2 days.
- 3 Proper Alignment:** To avoid joint injuries, watch your posture. A good rule of thumb is to make sure your joints are facing the same direction. For example, if your hips are facing forward, make sure both your knees and your feet are also facing forward. If your right leg is pointed to the side, then make sure your right knee and right foot are also facing that direction. This will help reduce the amount of strain on your joints.
- 4 Balanced Training:** Try a balanced approach to your weekly workouts. Alternate your focus areas (arms, legs, core) so you're hitting all areas of your body over the course of the week. Cardio may be your favorite, but balancing it out with some strength training and yoga will help you train more effectively. Or building muscles may be your main priority, but incorporating some cardio and regular stretching will help keep your body in tip-top shape.

Move your body in a variety of ways to improve cardiovascular health, strengthen muscles and joints, prevent injury, and keep your workouts interesting!



Workers Compensation Injuries:

Using Yoga for Pain Management and Repair

A message from your Healthy U @ Work Wellness Champion:

Pamela Johnson, BS, HHP-AADP, CFMP, RYT



There are many different types of yoga that provide pain relief, musculoskeletal alignment and repair, and improvement in nervous system function. While each type of yoga has its own long list of benefits, some provide more benefit than others for recovering from injury.

Bikram is a form of Yoga that has helped many people resolve back pain, stiff necks, headaches, scoliosis, herniated disks and many other back problems. The Bikram Yoga series is designed to work the spine in every direction, creating a healthy spine and thus a healthy nervous system. It is important to know that if you have certain back conditions modifications may be necessary to ensure a safe practice. A qualified instructor can provide modifications if needed.



Research has shown that back pain located in the lower back and legs due to a herniated disc can benefit through stretching regularly. Spinal extensions which include leg and arm lifts, and back bends allow spinal disc fluid to resettle in-between the vertebrae. This technique can help ease a bulging disc back into position and thereby reduce a great deal of the pain originating from the injury.

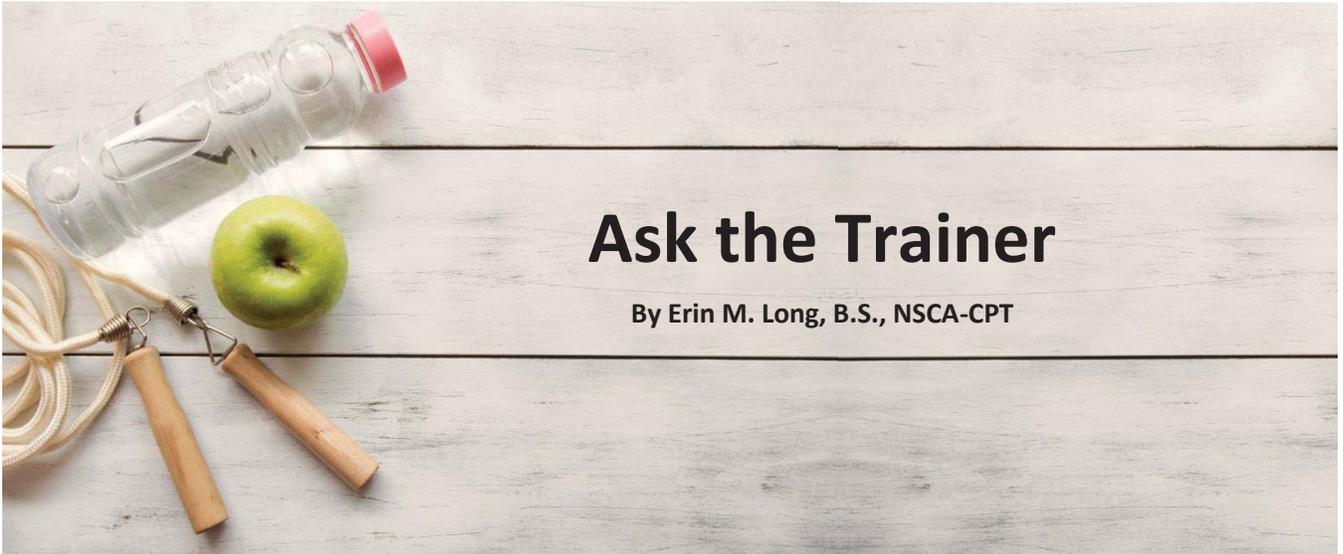
The Locust, Full Locust, Cobra, and Bow poses are a part of the “Spine Strengthening Series.” Each of these four postures includes spinal extension. By lifting the extremities or bending the spine, these positions can help the most when suffering with a lower back injury such as a slipped disk. And with the combined temperatures of a hot bikram studio, the muscles are warm and limber before you start the stretches. Go to <http://www.bikramyogaposesguide.com/> for a full description, illustration and video of each exercise in the 26-part series. Talk to your doctor before attending a heated yoga session if you think you may be at-risk for high blood pressure or heart disease.

Restorative yoga is often used to help recover from surgery or a new injury. It offers a series of supported stretches and gentle twists that are held for up to 5 minutes each. Props such as blankets and bolsters are used so that the body is fully relaxed. This balances the body and provides the healing benefits of a prolonged deep state of relaxation. Practicing restorative yoga also enables blood flow to be redirected blood to help rehabilitate injuries.

Yin yoga is another type of yoga that helps release large muscles like hamstrings that pull the body out of alignment. Yin yoga includes a series of stretches that last from 3 to 5 minutes each, which enables the fascia (the thin sheath of fibrous tissue enclosing muscles and organs) to release, which is often the cause of pain. Holding long stretches also create a release of the hormone DHEA known for fighting the effects of stress and increasing longevity.

Not only do these types of yoga help repair injury, when done regularly they prevent injury and are a great way to get employees back to work and keep them working pain free.

Pamela Johnson, BS, CEMP, HHP, AADP, RYT is a Certified Functional Medicine practitioner and Yoga Instructor. She specializes in Corporate Wellness and integrating functional medicine into corporations, clinics and hospital systems.



Ask the Trainer

By Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: Hey Erin! December is a very hard month for me. I have at least one or two holiday parties a week and, with it being the end of the year, my job gets crazy. I work out regularly and eat really well, I've lost nearly 40 pounds this year and do not want to put any back on. I want to stay on track as much as possible with my eating and working out. Any suggestions on how to do so?

-Samantha, 42

A: Hello Samantha! Congrats on an amazing year in your fitness journey, you should be very proud of yourself. This time of year is so much fun. Reunions with family. Parties with friends. It is easy to understand how you can get out of your normal routine and get off track. It's so easy to give in to temptation and forget what's important to us. Many people just tell themselves they will get back on track next year but why wait? You've worked so hard this year. Let that be your motivation this holiday season. You've already come so far. With that being said it is also the holiday season, a time to have fun and be grateful. We should all be allowed to eat something we enjoy every once in a while. Allow yourself an occasional treat, enjoy it and move on. Try not to dwell on it or feel guilty.

Eating before going to a holiday party is one of the best things you can do. If you know there will be a lot of unhealthy options make something healthy and eat it prior to the event. This way you have fueled your body with good choices. If you plan to eat at the event, be sure to eat as clean as possible the rest of that day. Drink lots of water and eat plenty of protein and fiber to help you feel full and fight cravings. One thing I always tell my clients is to never skip meals on days like this. You may cut portions if needed but don't skip meals. Maybe even sneak in an extra 30 minutes of working out if you can.

Speaking of working out, that can also become lax this time of year so I highly recommend scheduling it into your day. Write it into your daily planner. You may have to get up 30 minutes earlier to get it in but at least it will be done so if something comes up during the day your workout won't be forgotten! If your schedule is tight and you are unable to get up any earlier, incorporating movement throughout your day will help. Park a little further from work, get up every hour and walk for a few minutes, just try to stay as active as possible. Another option would be breaking the workout up in to 10-minute increments. Do 10 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch, and 10 minutes at night.

Good luck this holiday season! And Happy Holidays!

Want to Know More? Contact Working Well for more information on wellness programs and how they can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.



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