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# Healthy U @ Work



December 2015

## Nutrition



## Healthy Holiday Eating Plan

Whether your December calendar is filled with holiday parties or you are busy with family get-togethers, it's easy to find yourself faced with too many treats and a few extra pounds come the New Year. With a little preparation and information, you can still enjoy holiday food and drink without unnecessary weight gain.

**Prepare:** If you are cooking for a party or just for your family, cook smart. Choose lean proteins over higher fat choices. Replace whole milk in recipes with low-fat versions or buttermilk. For baked goods, try replacing half of the fat with applesauce. A pie with a graham cracker crust is usually lower in calories and fat than one with a traditional piecrust. If you are making gravy, cool your pan drippings first so you can skim the fat off the top. Make sure you keep plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables on hand. If you are going out to a party or to dinner, eat a light snack that includes some protein first. You are more likely to overeat if you "starve" yourself all day.

**Choose:** When faced with a full buffet of holiday goodies, you can make healthier choices. For example, one glass of white wine usually has fewer calories than a mixed drink or glass of punch. Hot chocolate is almost always a better choice than eggnog, and skip the whipped cream for added calorie savings. Have 2 holiday cookies rather than a slice of pie. You don't have to say "no" to all the treats. Choose treats with lower fat and calories when you can, but be sure to enjoy your absolute favorite holiday food. By choosing wisely everywhere else, your one indulgence won't be a problem at all.

**Enjoy:** Holiday parties and family events often allow you to enjoy the company of those you may not

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get to spend much time with throughout the year. Focus on the spirit of the season, which includes the food but is so much more. The holidays are a great time to reconnect with friends: make memories with your family and even volunteer your time or resources to helping others. Enjoy each homemade Christmas cookie and party appetizer you choose, and remember the spirit of the season goes beyond what's on your plate.

Happy Holidays!

## Produce of the Month: Pears



Golden, green, red or brown – pears are a sweet fruit, related to the apple. Pears have been around for thousands of years, found in Asia and Ancient Greece. Brought to America by the colonists, pears have grown to be an important product of the United States. Pears are good for colon health and eye health and may help protect against postmenopausal breast cancer.

**The Basics:** In season in the fall, pears remain plentiful throughout most of the winter. Look for pears that are not bruised and have a slightly sweet smell. Unripe pears are hard to the touch and will ripen when left out on the kitchen counter. If ripe, pears may be stored in the refrigerator. Wash before using and prepare according to your needs.

**Try This:** Pears have a mild flavor and are easily added to both savory dishes and desserts. Try serving sliced pears with a dollop of a cream cheese, topped with chopped walnuts. Or poach some pear halves in white wine,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of sugar, and some vanilla. Simmer for 15-30 minutes until the pears are tender but not falling apart. Serve with fresh whipped cream. Pears work well with fish and salads as well.

**The Facts:** Pears are a good source of vitamin C, vitamin K and copper and are an excellent source of fiber. An average pear contains about 150 calories.

### Did you know?

- Pears are said to ripen better off the tree.
- Ready to check for ripeness? Gently check the neck of the fruit for slight give. If it is a little soft, it is ripe!
- Anjou pears do not change color when ripening.
- Brown spots on a pear have a name: russetting. These brown spots don't affect the flavor and are a natural characteristic of many variety of pears.



# Hand Washing: the Best Way to Stay Healthy

## Preventive

December 6-12, 2015 is National Handwashing Awareness Week! Washing hands has been and continues to be one of the best ways to prevent illness. Here is a reminder of the best method for keeping hands clean and staying healthy.

- ✓ Wet your hands with water - warm if possible.
- ✓ Apply soap and rub hands together, creating a lather on the palms and backs of hands as well as between the fingers.
- ✓ Continue rubbing your hands together for approximately 15-20 seconds. (This is where singing "Happy Birthday" twice can help you. Singing "Happy Birthday" twice takes approximately 15-20 seconds.)
- ✓ Rinse your hands in clean, running water.
- ✓ Dry your hands using a clean paper towel. Some studies have shown that using a paper towel reduces bacteria on hands, while an air dryer (available in many public bathrooms) does not and may actually increase bacteria, a potential concern to anyone with any condition in which general immunity is compromised.

When washing hands at home, most of us have a hand towel in the bathroom. Towels can trap bacteria and provide a place for them to multiply, creating a source for illness for the next person who uses the towel. While this is not an issue most of the time, it is especially helpful to place paper towels in your bathroom when someone in your home is ill, or give the person who is sick his or her own hand towel to use.

When soap and water is not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer will work. Apply sanitizer to your hand and rub your palms together, covering both sides of your hands as well as between your fingers. Continue rubbing until your hands are dry. Warning: Keep all hand sanitizers away from small children. Do not leave on a counter or in a place where young children have easy access. If swallowed, see medical help immediately or contact the Poison Control Center.

During the cold and flu season, hand washing is something we can all do to increase our chances for staying healthy.



## **A message from your Healthy U @ Work Wellness Champion:**

### **Out with the Old, in with the New**

**Pamela Johnson, BS, HHP-AADP**

As we plan for a new year, we might be contemplating some sort of a dietary cleanse. While this is a great idea, it is important to choose your strategy based on where you are now. For example, since it has been reported that 99 percent of American's are mineral deficient, a juice fast might create more of a nutrient deficit in the average person who is eating the Standard American Diet (SAD).

Many holistic nutritionists agree that a good plan begins with daily gentle cleansing. This means including cleansing foods in the diet every day rather than taking on a 3 or 7-day juice fast. While there are fasting protocols for different health conditions, you can feel the benefits of a general cleanse simply by consuming parsley and cilantro, which bind with heavy metals to detoxify. Other cleansing foods include kale, cucumber, collard greens, chia seeds and aloe Vera juice to absorb bile salts and fat-soluble toxins.

The concept of "adding in" cleansing and nutrient rich foods to "crowd out" the unhealthy foods is the first-line strategy for changing eating behavior. So if you are eating a sandwich for lunch, replace lettuce with Swiss chard, eat a side of sliced cucumber. Add cilantro to your salad. Throw some dulse (seaweed flakes) into your soup. Add chia seeds and aloe vera juice or gel to your morning smoothie.

Not only will you be removing toxins, you will also be adding in powerful antioxidants and nutrients such as magnesium, calcium and vitamin K. At the same time, you will build your immune system, preventing aging and stroke, and reducing your risk for colon cancer by 50 percent—all from adding cruciferous greens to your daily routine.

Reducing or eliminating refined sugar would be the next step. Once you begin to feel better by having energy from added nutrients, cravings for sugar should be less intense. Remember your body makes you crave unhealthy foods when it is not getting the building blocks of nutrition.

To aide in the process, you can replace sugary foods with raw honey which is rich in minerals, antioxidants, probiotics and enzymes; dark chocolate in its natural state (cocoa nibs or powder) which is filled with antioxidants, magnesium, iron, and chromium; dates and figs that filled with potassium and berries that can reduce the risk of hypertension and diabetes.

Now you are ready to eliminate refined sugar and or gluten from your diet, because you are satisfied and are filling in your nutrient deficiencies. Eliminating processed sugar helps to reset metabolism and start you on your way to healthy 2016.

Whether it's the busy holiday season, winter weather woes, or normal daily grind – stress seems to be in full swing this time of year. It's important to understand that some amount of stress can actually be helpful, forcing us to focus and be productive. Chronic stress, however, can negatively affect both physical and emotional health. And while we can't avoid all stress, there are actions we can take to help reduce the feeling of stress and its impact on our health.

#### At Work:

- Turn off the notification sound on your email and decide to check email at certain times of the day.
- Keep all deadlines and due dates posted where you can see them **when you need to**. Staying organized is a great way to reduce stress.
- Have a system to keep track of progress toward goals and deadlines.
- If possible, keep a large glass of water at or near your workstation. Hydration helps with feeling better and reducing stress.
- Avoid the office drama whenever possible. It creates unnecessary stress and can impact job performance.
- Get up and move every hour. Prolonged sitting is a serious health risk.
- Take classes, go to seminars, and attend conferences. Staying on top of what's new in your field can make you more confident and more qualified in order to take advantage of career opportunities.

#### At Home:

- Keep clutter to a minimum. Clutter is a common stressor!
- Avoid too much light from televisions, iPads, tablets, smart phones, etc. This light interferes with your sleep cycle, which can impact your stress level.
- Get more sunlight! While *avoiding* types of artificial light can help stress, getting more natural light is also a good way to reduce stress!
- Take some time for quiet. Noise is a common cause of stress.
- Take up knitting, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, or some other hobby. Activities like these are great for relaxation.
- Exercise daily!
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables on hand. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is the best way to stay healthy and fight stress!

#### Less is More: Sleep

Randy Gardner holds the record for longest period without sleep -- 11 days and 24 minutes. The record, set in 1964, has stood for 51 years. Staying awake for that amount of time has consequences. By day 4, Gardner experienced his first hallucination -- one of several to come. He thought he was a famous football player. By day 11, simple cognitive tasks stumped Gardner. Asked to count down from 100 by subtracting 7 each time, he stopped at 65. When asked why, he said he'd forgotten what he was doing. Peter Tripp, a

Less is More continued on page 5....

disk jockey, went without sleep for 200 hours to raise money. Same thing happened. At one point, he complained that spiders were colonizing his shoes with webs. There were no spiders.

## How important is sleep?

If sleep came in vials like testosterone, it'd be classed as a performance-enhancing drug and banned. Or, at least, that's close to the finding of one 2011 Stanford study. Researchers took Stanford's men's basketball team and, over the course of two seasons, compared the players' athletic performance with typical sleep and with "extra" sleep. For the "extra" sleep period, players were instructed to get at least 10 hours each day.

The results? When players had more sleep, they ran faster, scored more free throws, and landed more 3-point baskets. About 10% more, in almost every case. Sleep was more effective than any illegal drug they could have taken.

## So, what can be done? How can you get more, better sleep?

**Stop drinking caffeinated beverages after 3p.m.** I know what you're about to say to me. Coffee before bed doesn't bother you. You can go out to eat, have a post meal cup of java at 8pm, and be asleep by 10. Same with tea, you might say. But that's not the whole story. While you may be able to fall asleep after consuming caffeine, it's a lower quality, lighter sleep than you'd have otherwise and is less beneficial. Caffeine inhibits your ability to enter that REM cycle deep sleep (as does alcohol.) It even goes so far as to shift your internal clock forward. A double espresso 3 hours before bed tricks your body into thinking it's 40 minutes earlier in the day. For a good night's rest, try to keep your coffee habit a *morning* habit.

**Avoid backlit screens and artificial lighting before bed.** Humans evolved to be awake when the sun is up, and asleep when it isn't. Thus, your body sets its circadian rhythm -- its sleep wake cycle -- based on sunlight. Unfortunately for us, we haven't yet evolved to deal with artificial lighting. Our body thinks that lamps and computer screens are the sun and, thus, they keep us awake at night. These lights suppress melatonin production, a hormone that results in that sleepy feel. Using your phone in bed is keeping you awake at night. What can you do about it? Keep backlit screens to a minimum an hour before bed. Stick to reading a book under low light, and leave your phone and laptop until the morning.

Happy snoozing!

### Can I Work Out if I'm Sick?

### Fitness

#### Yes, if

- It's a mild cold or allergy.
- Your symptoms don't keep you awake at night.
- Your symptoms are containable (no sneezing or coughing on gym equipment, etc.)
- You don't exercise vigorously.

#### No, if

- You have a fever or the flu
- Your virus has settled in your chest (coughing, breathing trouble, etc.)
- You have any vomiting or diarrhea.
- Your doctor has recommended complete rest.

**Ask the  
Trainer:  
Sweat**  
*By Erin M.  
Long, NSCA-  
CPT*

**Question:** Hi Erin. I was wondering why people sweat differently when working out. My boyfriend and I workout together, and we push ourselves hard. But he sweats so much more than I do. I feel like I must not be working as hard as I think I am because of this.

Jennifer P.

**Answer:** Hey Jennifer. I imagine you can get frustrated, wondering who is working harder. But everyone does sweat differently. Sweating is your body's way of cooling itself to maintain a healthy body temperature. How much you sweat can depend on numerous factors. Some of these factors include your gender, the number of sweat glands you have, temperature of the atmosphere you are working out in or how hard you are working during exercise. I have worked with people who can sweat just by walking into my studio to people who work their butt off and barely glisten by the end of an intense workout. In your case, you need to know a few simple facts. First off, women have more sweat glands than men, but that men's glands are more active. And studies have shown that fit men tend to sweat more than fit women. Secondly, some studies have shown that women sweat less than men because women are more efficient sweaters than men. A woman's body evaporates sweat on their skin more efficiently, which cools down the body without a lot of perspiration. Knowing this, you shouldn't compare how much you sweat to how much your boyfriend does as an indication of who worked harder during the workout. Hope this helps answer your question.

## Want to know more?

Contact **WORKINGWell** for information on wellness programs. We can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee well being.

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