

Your Wellness Toolkit

Volume 1, Issue 2

FITNESS at work...



Healthy Back Desk Stretch

The "Healthy Back Desk Stretch" shown above, helps to open up and stretch the neck, upper chest, mid-back, gluteal, hamstring muscles and piriformis. This stretch may help provide upper and lower back relief from extended computer work where there is a tendency to **slouch forward**. (If experiencing any neck/back pain or concerns consult your primary physician before beginning this or any new stretch or exercise).

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Q&A Café...

Q. What are some helpful tips for dealing with Workplace Stressors?

A. Over time, anxiety and related symptoms can pose serious health risks/issues and cost employers a great deal of money through lost productivity due to sick days and presenteeism (days when we are present but not fully engaged or productive in our jobs). Stress and anxiety can show up as symptoms of other issues such as arm pain or tingling in your limbs, chest pains and heart fluttering. Stress can increase your risk of high blood pressure, headaches and make you more prone to illness. Finding ways to manage stress like massage, yoga, meditation, and taking vacation time is an important part of staying well.

FOOD for thought...

4 Good Reasons to Cook at Home

As life becomes increasingly hectic and commute times to our jobs get longer, it is more common these days for families to eat out rather than prepare meals at home. Even the idea of cooking at home today may mean microwaving a pizza or opening a can of soup, hardly a nutritious meal. This trend has led to a decrease in nutrient density and much greater health risks. Making your meals at home from fresh ingredients means you can make healthier options and spend less money.

1. Portion Control – The average size of restaurant meals today is enough to feed at least two people. How many of us eat more when we eat out simply because it's in front of us? This "super-size" trend has contributed to the obesity crisis we have today. If you eat at home, you

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RECIPES for health...

Asparagus Soup



Soup isn't just for winter! Try this delicious asparagus soup recipe any time of year. Asparagus is chock full of nutrients including folate, vitamins A, C, E and K along with essential minerals like manganese, zinc and selenium, all critical for a strong and healthy immune system. It's a quick fix and you can bring it to work and warm it for a healthy lunch or snack option.

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WORKING well...

Employees Can Make a Difference!

A major 2016 Wellness Initiative at Clarks Americas Corporation, led and coordinated by our awesome Benefits Manager, was the 2nd annual Health Fair, hosted on-site at our Newton, MA and Hanover, PA office locations.

In our Newton office, 81 employees took part in Biometric Health Screenings where they learned important health numbers including their BMI, cholesterol profile, A1C and glucose levels, blood pressure and pulse rate. The health fair also included a Red Cross Blood Drive, Smoothie and Hydration station, Dermascan sun damage screening, a popular make-your-own-trail mix station, and vendors from local sports clubs offering generous class and membership discounts to employees. Extra excitement was stirred up with a rowing machine competition. Several enthusiastic employees joined in an intense mini exercise class led by a local CrossFit owner and athlete to get a taste of the challenge of a full class.

The hidden sugars in common foods and drinks were brought to light through several eye-opening visuals. Our "Sugar Display" shown below revealed many everyday foods that contain high amounts of sugar and high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), and educated employees on the potential dangers of each. We presented actual snacks that employees would typically think are "healthy" and often consumed at work such as yogurt, oatmeal, energy bars, and condiments like ketchup and jam. We presented both an unhealthy, high-sugar, HFCS option as well as a healthier option. The prices of each product were clearly labeled – driving home the point that healthier does not always equate to "more expensive."



One employee commented, "Incredible! I was shocked and amazed at the amount of sugar I saw. I will never drink a Coke again!" It was a successful day, with much knowledge gained and fun was had by all who attended.



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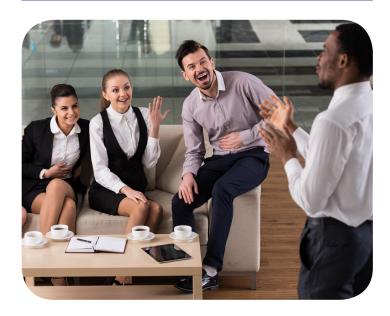
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POSITIVITY at work...

Start a "Healthy Meeting Movement" at your workplace!



Are you tired of sitting through unproductive and sleep-inducing team meetings or presentations? Or, unhealthy meetings consisting of donuts, inactivity, and inconsequential minutia that put you into either a sugar or "death by PowerPoint" coma?

If you are nodding your head to the above, why not become a **Healthy Meeting Change Agent** and lead the way in cultivating healthier, more productive meetings in your organization!

YES, you have the power to revitalize, energize, and inspire. Begin a "Healthy Meeting Movement" with these simple yet oh so impactful strategies.

Bring these healthy ideas to your next team meeting or group presentation:

1. Involve a health-related theme and physical activity in your team meetings.

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44 Worry is like a rocking chair, it gives you something to do, but gets you nowhere. 77

- ENGLISH PROVERB

CONTINUED:

"Healthy Back Desk Stretch"



Remember, good back health begins with proper sitting techniques along with back/core strengthening and stretching exercises.

Here's how to safely perform this back stretch at your desk:

- Sit erect with your back close to the chair. Cross one leg over the other and place the opposite hand gently on the outside of your top thigh or upper part of your calf (being careful not to exert pressure on the knee cap itself). If the chair does not have wheel locks or moves easily, position it against a wall or desk when doing this stretch.
- Gently push down on your thigh or calf and with slight pressure, bring it towards your body with your other arm holding the arm rest next to it (or you may hold the back of the chair for a deeper stretch). If able, slightly rotate from your core in the opposite direction of your crossed thigh to deepen the stretch (sitting forward holding your thigh will also provide an effective stretch if rotating is not comfortable for you at this time.)
- Hold the stretch for a minimum of 10 seconds working up to 20-30 seconds or longer over time. Maintain normal breathing rhythm, then switch sides. Repeat 1-2 times per side, several times a day to help relieve neck tension and back strain from extended desk sitting.

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Importance of "Movement Breaks" at Work!



Sitting too long at your desk without movement breaks, can over time, promote muscle degeneration. This will often manifest in weak abdominal muscles, tight hips, and weak gluteal muscles which can lead to neck/back issues and excruciating back pain. Studies show that even if you exercise for an hour a day in the gym, if you spend the majority of your day sitting (i.e. in your car commuting to work, in meetings, watching your kids play soccer, or on the couch), it may not be enough to undo the damage caused by extensive sitting.

Recent research also tells us that sitting leads to other health problems like high blood pressure, heart disease, and even cancer.

So, let's get moving!!!!

Here are some tips to add movement to your day and help you get away from your desk.

Ways to sit less at work:

- 1. Set an alarm on your phone or computer to remind you to get up and move every hour. Aim to walk 5 minutes for every hour of sitting.
- 2. Stand up when you are talking on the phone get a good headset so you can stand, move, or stretch while you are talking.
- 3. Walk to your co-workers desk to ask them a question instead of sending an email.
- 4. Drink a lot of water (we should be drinking half of our body weight in ounces every day) as this will also help get you moving more (i.e. frequent restroom breaks).

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- 5. Involve standing and stretch breaks in your staff meetings or hold "walking meetings".
- 6. Try using a standing desk.
- 7. Eat away from the office, possibly outside if the weather permits. Getting some sunshine will help you get your daily dose of Vitamin D.
- 8. Offer to drop the mail off in the mailroom for your co-workers or pick up their lunch or coffee for them if it's within walking distance.





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"4 Good Reasons to Cook at Home"





- can control not only your portion sizes, but the quality of the food you eat as well. Preparing healthy meals with lots of fresh vegetables, along with lean protein and a whole grain, will greatly enhance your family's health and vitality.
- 2. Cost Control Eating at home can dramatically reduce your food budget. With this reduction you can afford to buy healthy organic and locally-grown produce. Just consider the cost of eating out for a family of four. Even eating out at a fast food restaurant can cost you \$25 \$30 or more. For this same amount you can prepare and enjoy a healthy meal at home. To save even more money, prepare enough for leftovers to either freeze for another time or eat the next day for lunch. Shopping at bulk grocers for non-perishable staples and frozen meats, fish, and vegetables will also help you reduce costs.
- 3. "You Are What You Eat" A nice meal out at a restaurant occasionally is fine, but eating out regularly can increase your weight, potentially damage your health, and drain your wallet. Restaurant foods also tend to be high in unhealthy fats, sugar and salt. Also, when eating at restaurants we often have no way of knowing what we are eating exactly as they are not required to fully disclose this information! When purchasing foods to prepare at home, you are able to read the ingredients for yourself or better still, choose "whole foods" for healthier, balanced meals.
- **4. Enjoy Time With Family and Friends** When you cook a nice meal at home, whether it's fresh fish, turkey burgers on the grill, or a healthy vegetable soup in the winter, engage the whole family in the meal preparation. And break bread together invite relatives and friends to celebrate your fellowship and cultivate healthy eating practices together.
- **5. Cooking Doesn't Have to be Difficult or Time-consuming.** Begin today by preparing simple and healthy home-cooked meals for you and your family.

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"Asparagus Soup"



Ingredients:

- 2-3 tablespoons butter
- 2 lbs. fresh asparagus, trim ends and chop coarsely
- 2 large sweet onions chopped coarsely (about 2 cups)
- 1 carton reduced-sodium chicken broth (32 oz.) for a vegetarian option use vegetable broth
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon dried tarragon
- · Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Heat a Dutch oven over med-high heat and melt butter. Add chopped onion and asparagus. Cook 10-12 minutes until crisp
and tender. Add broth, lemon juice, tarragon, and salt and pepper. Bring to boil and simmer 10 minutes or so until asparagus
is tender. Cool and then blend until smooth using a blender or an immersion tool.



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Start a "Healthy Meeting Movement" at your workplace!



- 2. Invite your Workplace Wellness Ambassador or Wellness Champions to your next team meeting for a mini health presentation or energizer to kick things off in high gear!
- 3. Plan a mid-meeting physical activity such as a 3-minute "Walk of Life" energizer.
- 4. Begin meetings or presentations with a fun, movement-based energizer (especially mid-morning, right after lunch, or mid-afternoon).
- 5. Start meetings with a productivity or wellness tip!
- 6. Include a stretch break for meetings lasting longer than 20 minutes.
- 7. Include a 10-minute chair exercise, yoga, or meditation breaks facilitated by a team member or a YouTube video.
- 8. Arrange "Walking Meetings" and/or make accommodations for physically active onsite meetings.
- 9. Limit unhealthy foods in your meetings to perhaps once a quarter (or better still, banish altogether). Include a smoothie or healthy snack contest in your meetings with prizes for best tasting, most healthy snacks.
- 10. Hold a "Water Only" meeting with a theme on the importance of hydrating throughout the day (i.e. not all meetings need to involve food).
- 11. Practice the "20-20 Rule" in your meetings after 20 minutes of sitting, have a team member lead the group in a stretch break or simple exercise with energizing music.

Incorporate some of these "High Involvement - High Commitment" wellness strategies in your next team meeting to begin a Healthy Meeting Movement and become a Healthy Change Agent!





CONTINUED: Q&A Café...



Getting enough rest, exercise, and eating well are also proven ways to help alleviate stress. If you find that you are having chronic stress symptoms and associated health issues, it's important to talk to your health care provider to explore coping strategies and stress mastery techniques to help you deal with both workplace and personal stressors.

Additional Tips for Managing Workplace Stress:

- · Get active
- Don't multi-task
- Take breaks
- Create a peaceful environment (declutter and organization)
- Practice mindfulness
- Nurture relationships outside of work
- Talk to your boss (not about your boss) negativity and gossip are poison to your mind

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Q. How can I best support my lower back when sitting for prolonged periods of time?

A. You need to make sure you have good support for the lumbar spine (the natural curve in your low back). There are many lumbar supports that you can purchase. Here is one that I recommend to my patients (**see link below**). I love it because it has a strap that goes around your chair and you can also use it in your car!

http://www.optp.com/The-Original-McKenzie-Early-Compliance-Lumbar-Roll?kw=lumbar%20roll#.V9_3VIW-GTU

As a low cost alternative, you can also roll up a towel to a thickness of about 6-8 inches and place it in the small of your back. This supports the natural curve of your back and helps to reduce sitting fatigue and lower back strain.

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