

Take Charge!



Providing information and ideas for City employees and their families on how to improve health and wellness

DECEMBER 2009

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Pathways to Less Stress

Stress is a normal part of life. Everyone copes with it differently, and day-to-day stresses are as varied as the people who experience them. Even happy events, such as a holiday event, can be stressful.

Relationships, outlook, sleep, productivity and general health all can suffer from prolonged stress.

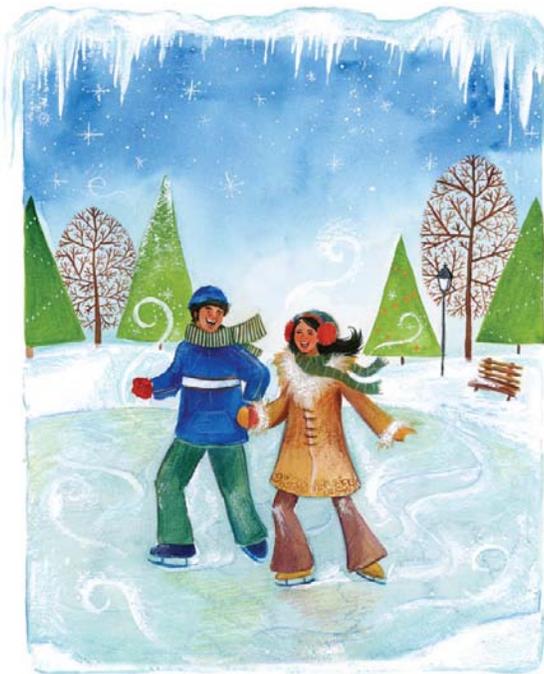
Does each day leave you feeling overwhelmed? Here are 3 practical ways to lower the stress and increase happiness now:

Save some energy for pleasure.

Be social – peers can offer much-needed support and empathy. *Volunteer* – being gracious and helping people nurtures your spirit. *Create* – using your talents and pursuing new activities can make life a little sweeter.

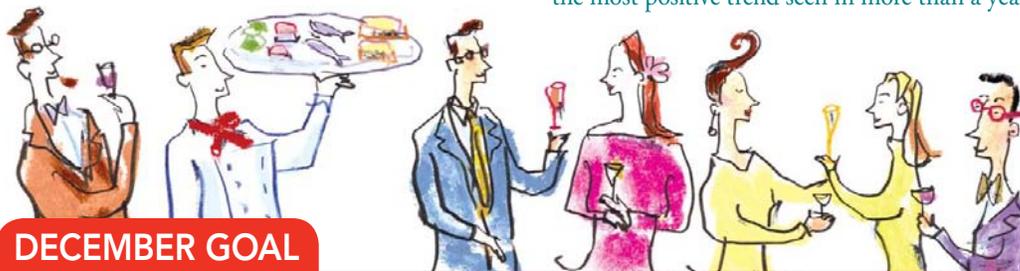
Take care of you. *Exercise* – it makes you stronger and relieves tension. *Rest* – lack of sleep not only tires you, it makes you irritable and moody. *Eat nutritious meals* – this may be something easy to forget when you're busy, but eating well-balanced meals boosts energy and mood to help you see the brighter side.

Find a way to cope. Whether your stress is triggered by a life-changing event or everyday pressure, work on solutions to reduce worrying; writing down your thoughts in a journal can help.



If life seems out of control to you, you're not alone. Seek guidance from a trusted counselor, who can help sort things out and offer new, positive directions.

How are you doing? The March 2009 Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index found 50% of Americans feel they are thriving, while 47% say they are still struggling. This is overall the most positive trend seen in more than a year.



DECEMBER GOAL

Avoid holiday party platter overload. Eat a nutritious meal before the event and fill up on fruits and vegetables once you arrive.

Wellness Events

Dealing With Loss

December 2
12 noon - 1:00 pm
Seattle Municipal Tower
Room 1600

December 17
12 noon - 1:00 pm
Seattle Municipal Tower
Room 1600

Featured Benefit

Do the holidays bring up feelings of sadness or grief? Holidays, traditional times to gather together with family and friends, can be a painful reminder of someone who isn't with you anymore.

Need help? Consider making an appointment with a professional counselor. Six free sessions are available to you or covered family members annually.

Call Wellspring Family Services, the City's EAP provider – 1-800-553-7798.

Confirmation Statements

During the week of December 14, 2009, you will receive a letter from the City confirming your 2010 health care plans and optional insurances. Please closely review to ensure your records match those of the City.

The packet also includes several notices about the City's health care plans. **No action is required of you; the notices are information only.**



SUBSCRIBERS: Find more tips on everyday wellness available at **Well Connections:** www.personalbest.com/Extras/bbwc1209

Staying Active in the Cold

Don't hibernate in winter – outdoor exercise prevents cabin fever, pumps up your energy on gloomy days and may boost your immunity during flu season. Have healthy fun in the cold with a little preparation:

- **Check with your health care provider first** if you have heart disease, asthma or another condition that may be aggravated by cold weather physical activity.
- **Dress in layers.** Wear moisture-wicking polypropylene, fleece or wool for insulation and a waterproof, breathable outer layer. Remove or replace layers as needed.
- **Wear a warm hat and gloves,** and if you have respiratory or cardiac concerns, wear a scarf over your mouth.
- **Stay visible after dark.** Wear light-colored or reflective clothing, and clip on a flashing light.
- **Choose footwear with good traction** to avoid slips. Avoid slippery sidewalks and roadways.
- **Use sunscreen and sunglasses** to reduce UV rays and glare. You can get a sunburn even on cloudy, cold days.
- **Watch the wind chill factor** and consider staying indoors when it's 0°F or below.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink one or two cups of water before exercising. Carry a water bottle and drink every 20 minutes if you are exercising vigorously.
- **Don't go it alone:** Exercise with a buddy or let someone know when you'll return.

Avoid frostbite and hypothermia.

If you notice pain, numbness, tingling or skin whitening – usually on the face, fingers or toes – get out of the cold immediately. **First aid:** Slowly warm the area without rubbing. If hypothermia symptoms occur – intense shivering, slurred speech, loss of coordination and fatigue – seek emergency help.

Give The Gift of Fitness

For gifts that say you care, think fitness – whether the recipient is young or old, a dedicated athlete or casual walker. Get shopping with these ideas:



PEDOMETER – your favorite walker can use this handy gadget to reach the recommended goal of 10,000 steps a day.

DIET & EXERCISE JOURNAL – tracking food and activity is a winning tool for the weight-conscious.

WORKOUT CLOTHING – rain, sun or snow, suitable attire makes exercise more comfortable.

EXERCISE BANDS OR TUBES – great for travelers or at-home exercisers who don't have a lot of room at home.

DUMBBELLS – choose from a wide variety of colors and weights.

WORKOUT GLOVES – protect hands from weights.

STAINLESS STEEL OR ALUMINUM WATER BOTTLE – available in fun colors, sizes and designs for every taste.

SPORTS BAG – from fashionable to no-nonsense, and always useful.

EXERCISE MAT – great for Pilates, stretching or yoga.

LESSONS – for yoga, tennis, golf, dancing – you name it, there's a class for everyone on your list.

EYE PROTECTION – swim goggles, safety glasses.

HELMETS – sporty, lightweight protection for skating, biking or skiing.

BACKPACK – for the hikers on your list.

EXERCISE DVD – for folks who like to work out at home or can't afford a health club.

If someone on your list is trying to lose weight, consider adding a steamer, oil mister or food scale to their kitchen. All 3 can help them cut calories when preparing meals. Or research cookbooks that emphasize healthful recipes plus taste. Cooking classes designed with health in mind are great, too.

Not sure what to buy? Give a gift card for a sporting goods or cooking store. No matter what you choose, a gift that raises health awareness is a gift that can last a lifetime.

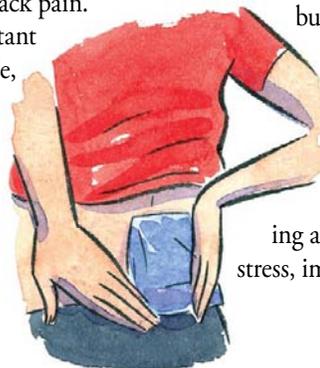
4 FACTS About Backache

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

FACT Back pain can often be avoided. Common, everyday back pain is triggered by several factors, including lack of fitness. Since weak muscles are more susceptible to injury, one of the best preventive steps you can take is to stay physically active. Activities usually beneficial for the back include walking, swimming, Pilates, yoga and tai chi; if you have back problems, check with your provider before starting any of these activities.

FACT Poor posture can cause back pain.

Proper body mechanics are important for reducing your risk. For example, use a lumbar support while sitting to reduce strain, or get up and move about to break muscle tension; place a stool under one foot at a time while standing for long periods. Learn how to lift objects correctly and ask for help lifting heavy or awkward objects.



FACT A medium-firm mattress is best for your back. Back rehabilitation studies show a medium-firm mattress might be better for your back than a firm one. Bedtime ergonomic tips: If you're already experiencing back pain, try lying on your side in a curled position with a pillow between your legs. If you are prone to backache and sleep on your back, place a pillow or rolled towel under your knees to relieve the pressure from arching your back. Rest your head on a pillow that won't angle your neck but helps keep neck and spine aligned.

FACT Stress can cause back pain. Stress typically produces muscle tension, triggering flare-ups of pain related to new or existing back problems. Meditation, deep breathing and relaxation exercises can help relieve stress, improve sleep and reduce back pain.

Q: What is binge drinking?

A: The CDC defines binge drinking as consuming 5 or more drinks during a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks during a single occasion for women. Binge drinking and heavy drinking (more than 2 drinks per day on average for men or more than 1 drink per day on average for women) are considered excessive alcohol consumption. Excessive drinking is the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death annually in the U.S.

Binge drinking concerns public health officials because it can lead to increased risk of

health problems, including liver disease and unintentional injuries.

Binge drinking should not be confused with alcohol addiction, or alcoholism. Most binge drinkers are not alcohol-dependent, says the CDC.

Health authorities recommend that men consume no more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day and women no more than 1 alcoholic drink a day.

If you find yourself consuming more than the recommended daily limit, consider cutting back on alcohol.

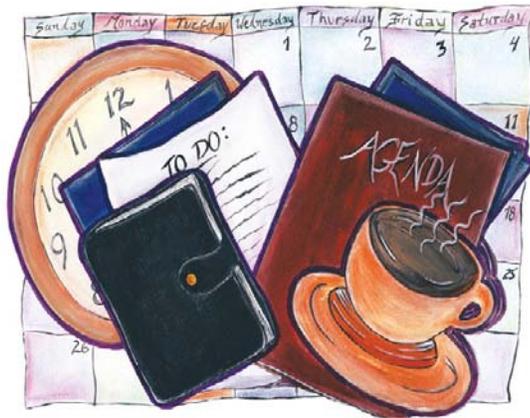
Time & Task Management

Is lack of organization causing you lost time and frustration? That can often lead to stress.

Getting more organized is a smart way to find more time. By some estimates, every hour you spend planning can give you 3-4 hours back. Think about how that extra time cushion could ease the squeeze and reduce stress in your daily life.

TEST: Are you a time-saver? Circle the habits that apply to your work style.

- 1 I avoid multitasking so I can focus more effectively on one thing at a time.
- 2 I always seem to be juggling several activities at once.
- 3 I work on high-priority tasks when I'm most alert.
- 4 I tend to work well under pressure so I put off projects until the last minute.
- 5 I designate distraction-free work periods for priority tasks.
- 6 I often run out of time to complete major tasks due to interruptions.
- 7 I delegate tasks and decline others to avoid over-commitment.
- 8 I have a hard time delegating tasks when I need help.
- 9 I maintain a visual to-do list to track my time, deadlines and appointments.
- 10 I often misjudge the time needed to complete tasks.
- 11 I use set periods to address e-mail and other communications all at once.
- 12 I often get bogged down with continuous e-mail, phone calls and meetings.
- 13 I check in with my supervisor and co-workers regularly for progress reports and feedback.
- 14 I am often too busy to stay connected with my co-workers.
- 15 I create routines, such as clearing my workspace, at the start and end of each day.



Results:

The odd-numbered statements represent a style of task management that can help you get organized, save time, and stay sane.

ACTION ITEMS

Identify and write down your personal time wasters, such as searching for stuff, long e-mail replies or chit-chat. Eliminate one per week. Tabulate the time you gained without it, and choose how you'll use the new found time – before it slips away.

Take a time-management course. Check with your company employee assistance program or research local education outreach options, such as a community college.

Get adequate sleep. Feeling rested and strong physically can significantly improve your focus and production so you get more done in less time. Everything is easier when you get your rest.



Cook It Right: Is it done?

Each year, 76 million people in the U.S. become ill from food and of those, nearly 5,000 die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Before you bite, make sure it's cooked right – especially meats, poultry, and other animal-based foods. Here are food safety recommendations from the USDA:

Steaks and roasts: Proper cooking kills harmful bacteria on the surface of solid cuts of meat, such as steak, but make sure the internal temperature is at least 145°F.

Ground meat: Avoid eating ground beef that is pink inside. Best internal temperature is at least 160°F.

Pork: Best internal temperature is at least 160°F for medium, 170°F for well done.

Poultry: Cook poultry to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F.

Egg dishes: Internal temperature should reach 160°F.

Fish: Cook fin fish until opaque and flaky to an internal temperature of 145°F.

What's the proper way to use a food thermometer?

1. Use an instant-read food thermometer toward the end of cooking time.
2. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the food, avoiding bone, fat, or gristle.
3. Clean the thermometer with hot, soapy water before and after each use.

MORE INFO ▶ USDA Food Safety Education: www.fsis.usda.gov/is_it_done_yet/

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Are you ready to work on a healthier lifestyle? Try completing a confidential health risk; receive a personalized action plan. Have a condition or illness question? Call a nurse at any time. Employees with City health care coverage and covered family members age 18 and over have access to these wellness tools:

- **Aetna members:** Log into your account at www.aetnavigators.com to access *Simple Steps to a Healthier Life*. Take the online health assessment to determine health risks. Receive a health report and personalized action plan plus the support of 10 online programs.

Get answers from a registered nurse any time – call Aetna’s Informed Health Line at 1-800-556-1555

- **Group Health members:** Log into your account at www.ghc.org to access *Momentum*. Take the Health Profile, receive a report and personalized action plan. Also receive free healthy lifestyle coaching.

For Group Health 24-hour consulting nurse services:

Seattle 206-901-2244
 Tacoma 253-596-3400
 All other areas 1-800-297-6877

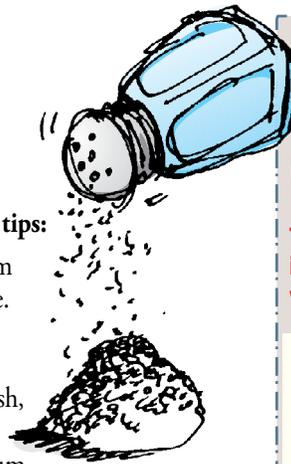
Are You Salt-Savvy?

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

If your kitchen is stocked with lots of high-sodium foods, you’re not alone. About 95% of men and 75% of women in the U.S. regularly consume sodium (in salt) in excess of recommended, healthy amounts and most of it comes from processed and restaurant foods.

Take steps to reduce your sodium intake with these tips:

- Make meals at home from scratch whenever possible. Fresh foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry and lean meats are naturally low in sodium.
- Flavor foods with herbs and spices instead of salt. Try fresh or dried basil, oregano, cilantro and garlic – or an herb-based salt substitute. You can also season with fresh-squeezed lemon juice or flavored vinegar.
- When buying packaged foods, check the label for salt content. Choose lower-sodium products – those with less than 140 milligrams per serving – whenever possible.
- Limit use of high-sodium foods and condiments. Smoked or pickled products, soy sauce, ketchup, barbecue sauce, soup mixes and tenderizers are common culprits.
- When eating out, order your meal prepared without added salt.



CHECK THE SALT-RELATED HABITS THAT ARE TRUE FOR YOU:

	TRUE	FALSE
I love salty foods such as chips, pickles, olives, ham and bacon.		
I always salt my food at the table.		
I have not tried using less salt in my cooking.		
I rarely have time to shop for or prepare fresh foods.		
I usually don't buy reduced-sodium products.		
I often eat frozen entrees or prepared foods.		
I frequently enjoy take-out or restaurant fare.		
If you marked "true" more than once or twice, your sodium habits may be a health risk.		

While you need some salt to maintain your body’s fluid balance, consuming more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day may raise your risk for chronic ailments. In sensitive people, larger amounts often lead to high blood pressure, heart failure, prostate problems, leg swelling and liver or kidney disease. The daily sodium limit for middle-aged and older adults is 1,500 milligrams, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Popular Gourmet or Culinary Salts

Using small amounts of specialty salts may enhance flavor without adding excess sodium. Some types contain trace amounts of minerals not found in table salt and offer a subtle taste or different texture when added to a dish just before serving. Grey salt, Fleur de Sel, Hawaiian sea salt, black salt from India, herb-enhanced salt, and smoked salt are a few of the interesting varieties.

Recipe of the Month

Black Forest Cheesecake Parfaits

This festive, no-bake treat stays light in calories by replacing regular sugar with a sugar substitute.

- 1½ cups frozen black cherries, thawed
- 8 tbsp (½ cup) granular sugar substitute
- ½ tsp almond extract
- ½ cup (8 tbsp) chocolate graham cracker crumbs
- 1½ tbsp cocoa powder
- ½ tbsp light margarine, melted
- 8-oz tub-style light cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup light sour cream
- 1½ cups light whipped topping

① Select 6 stemmed glasses (e.g., 8-oz. wine glasses). ② In a small bowl, mix cherries, 2 tbsp sugar substitute and almond extract. Set aside. ③ In another small bowl, mix graham cracker crumbs, 2 tbsp sugar substitute, cocoa powder, and margarine. Set aside. ④ In a medium mixing bowl, beat cream cheese with an electric mixer until creamy. Add sour cream and remaining sugar substitute and stir until smooth. Fold in whipped topping. ⑤ In the bottom of each glass, place 1 tbsp graham cracker mix. Press down with spoon. Place about 3 tbsp of cream cheese mix on top of each. (Use ½ of the cheese mixture.) ⑥ Divide the cherries among the glasses, placing them on top of the cream cheese layer. Add one more layer of cream cheese. Finish each parfait with 1 tsp of crumbs. ⑦ Enjoy immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.

Nutrition Facts

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Amount Per Serving	Calories	200
	Protein	7g
	Total Fat	8g
	Saturated Fat	6g
	Cholesterol	13mg
	Carbohydrate	24g
	Fiber	1g
	Sodium	290mg

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