

April - June 2004

Did you know?

- Claremont EAP can make referrals for after-school care, day camps, and summer camps
- If you participate in your company's FSA (flexible spending account), new legislation was passed to include some over the counter medicines
- Now is the time to prepare for *next* year's taxes; Claremont EAP can give you referrals to tax attorneys and CPAs

Claremont EAP
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Tips for Communicating Effectively with Your Boss

Just the thought of communicating with your boss can be enough to produce stress and anxiety. However, with a little preparation and practice, you can be on your way to confident and effective communication.



1. Before you speak to your boss, write down all the topics you want to discuss and what you hope to communicate.

2. Make sure you're clear about what you want or need from your boss.

3. In private, rehearse what you want to say to your boss.

4. When speaking to your boss, use qualifying words, such as "perhaps" and "maybe," rather than absolute words, such as "always," "every," "all the time" and "never." Speaking in absolutes can raise a person's defenses and cause resistance.

5. Make "I" statements, such as "I need guidance," instead of "you" statements, such as "You haven't given me guidance."

6. Avoid going to your boss when you're emotional. Give

yourself a cooling-off period to collect your thoughts and composure.

7. If at all possible, talk to your boss before issues become heated and you become emotionally involved.

8. Be an active listener. Learn to really listen and understand what your boss says. If you missed or weren't clear about a point, ask your boss to repeat or clarify it.

9. Try to repeat and rephrase the points your boss makes during a conversation to show that you're listening and understanding him or her.

10. Practice good body language. Look at your boss, lean into the conversation and avoid fidgeting.

11. Be assertive, not aggressive.

12. Keep an open mind and be open to compromise.

13. Avoid gossiping or spreading rumors to your boss.

14. Have a positive attitude.

15. Be sure to give your boss praise and recognition when it's due.

16. Communicate regularly with your boss to develop and maintain a comfortable relationship.

"Just the thought of communicating with your boss can be enough to produce stress and anxiety."

We're on the web
www.ClaremontEAP.com

How to Win Your War Against Allergies

If pollen gives you a runny nose, teary eyes or other hay fever symptoms, you're not alone. More than 40 million Americans suffer from seasonal allergies.

"No one can completely escape from pollen, but you should be able to protect yourself from some of its effects. The first step is to identify the pollen or pollens you're allergic to," says William W. Storms, MD, an allergist in Colorado Springs.

The timing of your attacks is a clue to what causes them. If you suffer in early spring, you're probably sensitive to tree pollen. Grass pollen dominates the late spring and summer months. Ragweed takes over in late summer and autumn.

If you have trouble pinning down the causes of your allergy problems, you may need to see an allergist. Once you know the cause, you'll know what to avoid and when to be careful. By using common sense, you should be able to lead a normal life.

The following strategies can help you tame your allergies.

Control your environment

During peak pollen months, stay indoors as much as possible and keep windows and doors closed. Never sleep near an open window.

Use an air conditioner and keep the filter clean.

When riding in a car, keep the windows and vents closed. Set



the air flow to "recirculating" or use the air conditioner.

Limit pollen exposure

Steer clear of open fields when you're outside. Let someone else mow your grass and weed your garden.

Learn the safest times to be outside. Pollen counts are lowest for an hour or two after a hard rain. They're highest at about 6AM on days with sun and light wind.

Use medication properly

Nonprescription antihistamines and decongestants in pill form can help dry and open up your sinuses.

Prescription nasal sprays reduce irritation but don't reach their full potential for several days. Avoid non-prescription nasal sprays; although they make you feel better for a while, they have a "rebound effect" that actually increases your sensitivity.

If your allergy is severe, you may need to build up your resistance with regular "allergy shots" that contain small doses

of the pollens that bother you. Called "desensitization," this treatment works for about 80 percent of the hay fever patients who try it.

Take care of yourself

Wash your hair every day to remove pollen.

Exercise

A good workout opens up nasal passages and can make you feel better. Reminder: Exercise indoors so your deep breathing doesn't expose your nose to more pollen.

Avoid drinking alcohol

It will make you feel more congested. Never mix alcohol and antihistamines, because that can cause drowsiness and a lack of alertness.

Don't smoke

Smoking can cause an allergic reaction or make existing sensitivities worse.

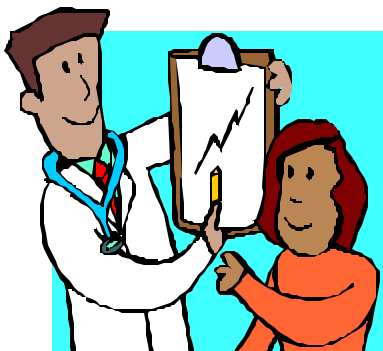
Relax

Stress can increase your sensitivity.

"No one can completely escape from pollen, but you should be able to protect yourself from some of the effects."

How Much Do You Know About Health?

Are you up-to-date on the latest health news? Take this health test and find out.



1. Sports drinks can provide more calories than the average person burns working out.

2. Tagamet and Zantac increase the effects of alcoholic beverages.

3. Eating vegetables and fruits with high water content can curb appetite.

4. Mild, not intense, exercise helps stroke victims regain motor skills.

5. The scent of green apples relieves migraine pain.

6. Chronic high blood pressure contributes to mental decline.

7. Some medications perform better when taken in the morning instead of the evening.

8. Drinking eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily helps the prostate gland function better.

9. Acids in cranberries promote tooth decay.

10. Children and teenagers who participate in sports are more likely to exercise as adults.

11. If you experience heart-attack symptoms, take one aspirin immediately.

12. The most popular aerobic-workout machine is the stationary bicycle.

13. One of your workouts each week should consist of stretching.

14. Pets are susceptible to Lyme disease.

15. Frozen vegetables have less nutritional value than fresh produce.

The answers

1. True. One-liter bottles often have more calories than are burned in a half-hour workout on a stair-climber. Use a sports drink only when you're doing explosive sprinting or power lifting for more than an hour.

2. True.

3. True. Watermelon and celery will stave off hunger, as will drinking water.

4. False. Doing intense exercise three times a week for two months helped stroke victims regain more motor skills than those who worked out less, one study found.

5. True. Research has also discovered the scent helps people deal with claustrophobia.

6. True. People with chronic hypertension exhibited lower intelligence and speed of performance over time, one study found.

7. True. Aspirin taken to avoid heart attack should be swallowed in the morning. For osteoarthritis, the drug is more effective when taken at night.

8. True. Water removes toxins that can build in the prostate.

9. False. Cranberries have a compound that prevents tooth decay by blocking bacteria that form plaque.

10. True.

11. True. Take one aspirin, then seek medical help immediately.

12. False. The treadmill is the most popular workout machine.

13. False. Stretch two or three times weekly for 10 to 20 minutes.

14. True. Dogs and cats bitten by ticks during spring and fall may risk exposure. A new vaccine can be given to 9-week-old dogs in regions where Lyme disease is most prevalent—the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific Coast.

15. False. Freezing locks in nutrients. Fresh items lose nutritional value quickly.

“Are You up to date on the latest news? Take this health test and find out.”

“Too much stress on the body or mind can make the immune system function poorly, leading to increased susceptibility to a wide variety of illnesses.”

How to Fight Stress-Related Diseases

If you're not feeling well or have a chronic disease, evaluating your emotional or psychological stress may help you find a cure.

“Research has shown over and over again that stress can exacerbate pre-existing physical conditions, and it can even bring on conditions that have not yet surfaced,” says psychologist Michael Heitt, PsyD, of the faculty and staff assistance program at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. “These can be anything from dermatological problems like acne or hives, to gastrointestinal problems and cardiac disease. When people say ‘It’s all in your head,’ I say ‘Yes, but your head’s connected to the body.’”

Stress as a trigger

About 75 percent of all doctor visits are for stress-related health problems, research indicates. But how does stress cause illness?

Dr. Heitt suggests that stress often is a trigger for a malady waiting to happen.

For example, suppose Joe has inherited a predisposition to develop a depressive disorder sometime in his life; for him, a difficult breakup with his girlfriend may be all that’s needed to trigger a bout of severe depression.

“Too much stress on the body or mind can make the immune system function poorly, leading to increased susceptibility to a wide variety of illnesses,” says Dr. Heitt.



Then, there’s the natural “fight or flight” response, in which the body instinctively reacts to stressful situations by priming the body for lifesaving physical action—which never occurs.

When you’re faced with extreme stress, for instance, the stomach limits digestion to conserve energy, blood vessels constrict to direct blood flow to major muscle groups, hormone levels change, blood pressure rises, and so on.

“This response is helpful when you’re threatened by a grizzly bear, but it can lead to physical ailments when unrelenting work stress eats at you day after day,” says Dr. Heitt.

Keeping stress in check

No one can avoid all stress—and a certain amount actually is good for you. But it’s always best to keep unhealthy levels in check when possible.

Dr. Heitt suggests following these steps to control stress: Understand what stresses you. Both positive and negative situations can tip the scales in your life. On the negative side, financial difficulties, divorce, criticism by a friend or boss, unrealistic work demands or death of a friend or family

member can cause stress. On the positive side, getting married, being promoted, having a baby, moving to a new home—even going on vacation—also can be stressful.

Notice when you’re most vulnerable to stress and prepare yourself. Are you most affected in the mornings? On Mondays? In the winter? Look at how you react to stress. Common effects include sleep problems, skin rashes, fatigue, irritability, agitation, headache, depression, excessive worrying, mood swings, chest pain, anxiety, upset stomach, ulcers and high blood pressure.

Recognize your stress signals.

Once you’re aware of your stressors, you’ll have a better idea of what you can control and how to control it.

Take these actions:

Get organized—use a daily planner, prioritize tasks.

Learn to set limits. Don’t agree to unnecessary, stressful obligations.

Be physically active and eat a healthful diet.

Get eight hours of sleep each night.

Don’t take illegal drugs and limit your intake of alcohol and caffeine.

Stop smoking. Take regular relaxation breaks instead of smoking breaks. You can

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How to Fight Stress-Related Diseases

(Continued from page 4)
follow a similar routine—
leave the office, get fresh air,
socialize, and take slow, deep
breaths.

Try some relaxation
techniques, such as self-
hypnosis or guided imagery,
prayer, meditation, yoga—
whatever works for you.

“If none of these steps help
you manage your stress,” says

Dr. Heitt, “then I recommend
you see a psychologist,
psychiatrist or social worker.”

Claremont distributes this newsletter to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and family matters.

For more information or for confidential help call
Claremont EAP 800.834.3773

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