

IMPACT

Employee Newsletter

April-June 2007

Did you know?

- Free "Simple Will" Kits are available from Claremont EAP
- A free credit report is available once per year
- Claremont EAP provides legal referrals for family law, consumer issues, traffic violations, and personal injury
- Referrals are available for child care, adult/eldercare, adoption assistance, school/college selection, and pet care

Claremont EAP
800.834.3773

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Exercises to Strengthen Your Back</i>	1
<i>Relieving Depression</i>	2
<i>Control Breathing, Control Stress</i>	3

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Exercises to Strengthen Your Back

Your back is always at work, holding you upright when you stand or sit, or even when you lie down. Keeping your back muscles strong and your spine flexible can help you avoid aches, pains and strains that many people suffer.

Strong back muscles help you maintain good posture. Your back has three natural curves that form an S-shape, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). When these three curves are in alignment, you have good posture. Without strong, flexible back muscles, your back loses the three curves, the NIH says.



Keep these guidelines from the NIH in mind when doing the following back-strengthening exercises:

- Start out slowly and build repetitions gradually.
- Stop any exercise that causes pain.
- Perform the exercises every day or every other day.
- Get your health care provider's OK to do them if you've had back surgery or have arthritis or osteoporosis.

- Repeat each exercise three to five times.
- Begin each exercise session with five to seven minutes of gentle aerobic exercise, such as walking or riding a stationary bicycle.

Partial sit-ups

This exercise from the NIH strengthens your stomach muscles.

- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Slowly raise your head and shoulders off the floor, keeping your hands across your chest.
- Work up to 30 repetitions.

Bridges

This exercise from the NIH strengthens your lower back.

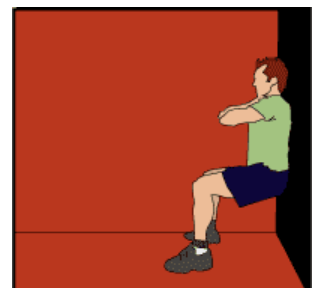
- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.

- With arms lying at your sides, tighten stomach muscles, squeeze buttocks, and slowly raise your hips into the air.
- Hold for 5 seconds and then slowly bring the buttocks back to the floor.
- Repeat 20 times.

Wall slide

This exercise from the NIH strengthens your back and leg muscles.

- Stand with your back against a wall and your feet slightly apart.
- Slide into a half-sit.
- Hold as long as you can; slide back up.
- Repeat 5 times.



Relieving Depression

Depression might be the temporary sadness that follows a loss, or it might be a more disruptive illness that interferes with the ability to enjoy life. Often the depressed person is overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness and inaction which make it difficult for the person to reach out to others. But depression can be treated with a combination of support, medical intervention and self-help.

Get Support

Talk to a trusted loved one or friend or call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773 to access your free and confidential counseling sessions. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Talking out the feelings of hopelessness and loneliness is the first step to recovery.

See a Doctor

Seeing a doctor helps determine the cause of depression. If you're not sure of the cause, start with your family doctor. If you know that your depression is brought on by a life situation, ask your family doctor for a referral to a psychiatrist or psychologist. If a referral is not available, call your community mental health organization for a referral or for treatment.



Therapy Can Help

Talking out problems with a mental health professional can be helpful in treating depression. No matter how trivial you consider your problems to be, or how hopeless you feel in doing anything about them, a mental health professional will take your problems seriously and give you undivided attention and direction. It will take time for the depression to lift, but the experience of safety and understanding from a mental health professional can be a positive step on the road to recovery.



Medication Is Available

Some types of depression respond well to medication. This must be decided by a doctor, usually a psychiatrist. Treatment of depression with medication, if used, is almost always in conjunction with therapy.

theorize that such exercise releases "feel-good" hormones in the brain that can help lift your spirits and make you feel more optimistic and in control. This approach can be useful, especially when taken with another form of therapy.

Begin Self-Help

Sometimes depression, especially one caused by a life situation, can be helped by following a healthy diet and getting regular exercise, especially aerobic exercise such as walking, bicycling or swimming. Scientists

Toward Recovery

Almost everyone who experiences depression recovers and feels good again. It's a step-by-step process, but the first small step leads to the next one and, with help, you'll be able to cope with life again. Seeing a doctor helps determine the cause of depression.

Control Breathing, Control Stress

You're stuck in rush-hour traffic, glancing at your car's clock every few minutes as you strain to get to work on time. You may not notice, but your breathing is shallow, your pulse rate is high and your chest feels tight. In fact, you feel this way in many stressful situations.

Sound familiar? Modern society creates more than its share of stress. It's difficult to change some situations -- but you can manage how you feel about them, experts say.

Begin with something you take for granted -- your breathing. If you're on that busy highway, pay attention to what's going on around you, but pay attention to your breathing, too. It's one of the few things you can control.

"Focusing on your breathing is one of the highly effective ways of reducing stress," says cardiologist James Rippe, M.D., author of 10 books on health and fitness, including "Healthy Heart for Dummies." "It brings you into the here and now," distracting you from your worries.

"We've become addicted to moving and thinking at hyper-speed," adds Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D., wellness expert and author of the book Timeshifting. "When we're under stress, our breathing is short, high up in the lungs. More relaxed breathing doesn't rely on the chest wall, but rather on the abdomen."

Abdominal breathing, experts say, provides the lungs with more oxygen and is more rhythmic. It's something that opera singers and other performers have known for years: Abdominal breathing allows them to control of their breath, to sing or speak with greater power, and to help them focus on the moment.

Breathing is just the beginning. If you can adjust your breath, you can adjust other things in your life, experts say. Slow your breath down when you walk into your office or home and you'll notice that you won't jump at the first problem that hits you. When your breath is quiet, you are quiet.

Practice your breathing

Believe it or not, most of us could use a breathing lesson. Practice at home a few times when you're not under stress. Then, try putting these techniques into practice when a stressful situation occurs.

In a relaxed setting, take three really deep breaths, focusing on your exhalations. "Really let it out," says Dr. Rechtschaffen. "It may feel unnatural at first, but stick with it."

Now, begin focusing on where your breath is coming from, experts say. Here's one practice method:

- Sit on the edge of a chair, feet flat on the floor.
- Place one hand on your lower back and the other hand on your abdomen, with three fingers below your navel.
- As you breathe in, your abdomen should rise, like a balloon inflating.
- As you breathe out, your abdomen should fall, with the sensation that the balloon is losing its air.

Concentrate on your abdomen, not your chest. Practice from a few minutes to 20 minutes each day. Soon, it will come naturally.

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CLAREMONT EAP

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.