

CLAREMONT EAP *Your trusted resource*

EMPLOYEE  
NEWSLETTER

**IMPACT**

July - September 2012



## Labor Pains: Reducing Your Desk-Job Ailments

If your job requires you to sit for much of the day, sooner or later you may experience pain in your back, neck, shoulder, hands or wrists.

You can avoid such problems by practicing the following strategies.

### *In this Issue*

- 1 Labor Pains:  
Reducing Your  
Desk-Job  
Ailments
- 3 Coping with  
Debt Related  
Stress
- 4 Keys to  
Efficient  
Swimming

### Comfort basics

These tips can help you prevent stiff muscles:

- Take a five-minute stretch break every hour. Stand up and stretch your whole body. Gently shake your hands and wrists.
- Occasionally do tasks that you can do while standing, such as filing or returning phone calls.
- Exercise to strengthen your upper back and shoulders. Ask a fitness professional or physician for specific exercises to strengthen these areas.

### Proper posture

Improper posture is a primary cause of back, neck and shoulder pain. To sit more comfortably:

- Sit with your back, head and neck in a line perpendicular to the floor. Don't lean or hunch over your desk or keyboard.
- Sit in a chair that supports your back at the spine's curve. The seat should incline slightly forward, and the cushion should curve slightly downward to relieve pressure on the thighs.
- Keep your back at right angles to the floor and your thighs and forearms parallel to it when you sit. Position your keyboard at the proper height. It should be at a height that keeps your forearms parallel to the floor while you type.
- Keep your shoulders down, not hunched or pulled up toward your head.
- Don't droop your head forward. Keep it squarely above your neck and shoulders.
- Use a footrest. Raising your feet and legs makes sitting more comfortable, helps relieve pressure on the back and legs and improves circulation.

Claremont EAP can help!

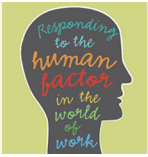
*For confidential help, call:*

**800-834-3773**

*or visit*

**claremonteap.com**

*Continued on next page*



Continued from previous page

## Hand and wrist protection

These tips can help you prevent pain in your hands and wrists:

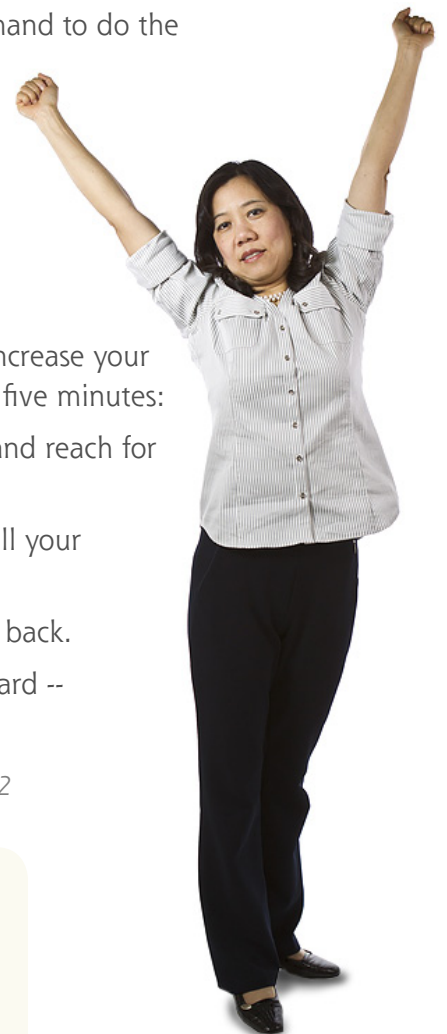
- Keep your wrists flat and in a straight line with your forearms.
- Use proper typing techniques. Touch the keys lightly and relax your hands when you pause between keystrokes.
- Avoid bending your wrists up and down or stretching your hands from side to side at the wrists. Move your arms to reach for keys at the edge of your keyboard.
- Don't push or rest your wrists or forearms against hard desk edges; doing so can compress your nerves and cause or aggravate nerve problems.
- Do hand stretches before starting work and during short breaks. These stretches should be "active": Use the hand's own muscles to stretch rather than using the other hand to do the stretching.
- Have your keyboard cleaned or fixed if the keys stick.
- Keep your mouse within easy reach of the keyboard. Be gentle; don't grasp or tap it forcefully.



## Daily stretches

Taking a short stretch break every hour or so can relieve muscle tension and increase your productivity and comfort. You can do all of the following stretches in three to five minutes:

- Overall body stretch. Get out of your chair, lift your arms above your head and reach for the sky. Repeat three times.
- Shoulder-blade stretch. Clasp your hands together behind your back and pull your shoulder blades together. Repeat three times.
- Shoulder rolls. Slowly roll your shoulders five times forward, then five times back.
- Head tilts. Slowly and gently tilt your head to the right, to the left and forward -- stopping when you feel a stretch. Repeat two more times.

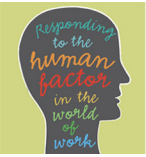


*Wellness Library Health Ink and Vitality Communications ©2012*

### 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.

For confidential help, call: **800-834-3773** or visit **claremonteap.com**



# Coping with Debt-Related Stress

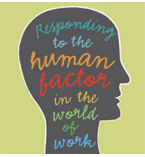
Many families face stress related to debt, and it can be made worse when it isn't addressed. Common feelings to have during these times of stress are anger, insecurity, hopelessness, and fear; and they are feelings that can affect the whole family. To make sure that you and your family handle debt stress in healthy ways, follow these steps:

- Talk. A common cause of divorce is financial stress, so if you have a spouse or partner, make sure to communicate about important financial topics, like budgets, spending patterns, savings, and investments.
- Accept your situation, and then consider the possibilities to resolve the situation. Is there someone who can help guide you or enlighten you about solutions? How about talking to a trusted financial advisor, a support group, or using free resources that your company provides?
- Just as important as finding ways out of debt, find ways out of stress. A clergy member, close family friend, or family member can help you release stress simply by talking with you about your problems. They may even have ideas on how you can help your financial situation.



- Take care of yourself. If you are burdened with stress and aren't meeting your own needs, you won't be able to adequately help your family meet their needs. Eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, and take time for relaxation.
- Stick to routines as much as possible. If the family goes to the park every Saturday, try to keep it that way. If you or your partner has to work extra hours, and routines need to be adjusted, it may be appropriate to talk to your children about why mom or dad needs to work. Children are often fearful about situations that they do not understand, so communicating with your kids can help reduce the family's overall stress level.
- As you lead your family out of debt, you will show your children that they, too, can climb out of trying situations. When children watch their mother or father do well in adverse circumstances, they are inspired to do the same.

For confidential help, call:  
**800-834-3773**  
 or visit  
[claremonteap.com](http://claremonteap.com)



## Keys to Efficient Swimming

You don't have to be an Olympic athlete to swim like one. Techniques gleaned from studies of Olympic swimmers can help you make like a fish in the pool -- and reap the benefits of an exercise that's ideal for people of all ages.

**Why swimming?** The pressure of the water helps support your weight, easing the strain on joints.

**Whether you're 16 or 76,** the key to swimming more efficiently is longer strokes, not faster ones, explains swim coach Terry Laughlin. That technique creates less drag and promotes "fish-like" swimming.

### Testing their medal

It's technique that sets Olympic swimmers apart from others in the water.

"For the average person, swimming is 70 percent muscle and 30 percent technique. It's the opposite of this for elite swimmers," says Mr. Laughlin, who has written several books on swimming, including "Swimming Made Easy."

Mr. Laughlin says we can take a lesson from the champions. Slip through the water, instead of churning against it like an eggbeater. Here's how:

- Achieve balance in the water. Keep your hips and legs high in the water instead of allowing them to drag underneath you.
- Stay on your side as long as possible. This makes you more streamlined.
- Reach out for the stroke as far as you can and keep your arm there as you glide through the entire stroke. Don't be in a rush to windmill your arm back for the next stroke.

Lewis G. Maharam, M.D., a sports medicine physician and medical director of the New York City Marathon, has been an avid swimmer since childhood. "You use all of your major muscle groups and improve your aerobic capacity, too," he says.

"It's non-weight bearing, so swimming doesn't place a lot of pressure on your joints," Dr. Maharam explains. "It's an especially great form of exercise for those who have arthritis because of the reduction of stress on the joints."

### Talk to your doctor

To be safe, experts suggest men over 40 and women over 50 visit their doctor before starting any exercise program. Your physician may recommend a cardiac stress test.

Dr. Maharam suggests swimming slowly without fatigue for 10 minutes before trying to swim longer.

"It's a good idea to keep a journal of how long you swim, how intense the effort and any pains you might feel," Dr. Maharam adds. Another suggestion from the doctor: Enroll in a swimming course at your local YMCA, American Red Cross, fitness program or health club.

How much swimming does it take to improve fitness? Experts recommend 30 minutes at least three to four times a week.

### Find the right pool

Some things to check when you're finding a place to swim:

- Is the pool well-maintained? The facilities should look clean. The YMCA says you should notice only a slight odor of chlorine. The pool water should appear clear, never cloudy, greenish or brownish. Grout around tile and cement should look clean, with no algae or mold.
- Does the pool deck have a non-slip surface? That can help head off falls when it's wet.

*Krames Staywell*

For confidential help, call:

**800-834-3773**

or visit

**claremonteap.com**