

Healthy U @ Work

April 2018

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The Power of Probiotics

DID YOU KNOW?

- Over 70% of your total immune system is controlled by the bacteria in your gut, which includes your small intestines and large intestine (colon).
- An imbalance of good and bad bacteria in the gut, can lead to indigestion, poor nutrition, weight gain, fungal infections, and skin conditions.
- Recent studies show that a reduction of healthy bacteria in the gut is associated with an increased risk of depression and anxiety.

Probiotics are the healthy bacteria that your body needs to function well. Probiotics already live in your body and play a major role in our digestion, immunity, and mental health, but certain conditions may limit these such as stress, food choices, environmental toxins, alcohol consumption and certain medications. Foods like refined white flour, sugar and artificial sweeteners, alcohol, processed meats, and gluten prevent a healthy balance of good bacteria in the gut and should be consumed in moderation.

To replace the probiotics and maintain a healthy balance of good and bad bacteria in the gut, it is recommended you eat or drink foods that contain these microorganisms. Eating foods such as unsweetened yogurt, miso, sauerkraut, tempeh, and kefir daily help to provide the healthy bacteria the digestive tract needs. You can also eat healthy food that feed the good bacteria in the gut such as fiber-full vegetables, onions, garlic, and healthy fats like coconut oil, olive oil, and omega-3 from fish, nuts, and seeds.

If you struggle getting probiotics in your foods every day, there are a variety of probiotics on the market that can help. To find the best probiotic supplement, start with the label and follow-up on the company's website for more information. Be sure that the product contains live active cultures and always check the expiration or use-by date. The label should include the specific strain of probiotic bacteria included in the supplement as well as the number of Colony Forming Units (CFUs). Supplements are not regulated by the FDA so do your research when choosing a probiotic. As always, talk to your physician before taking any over-the-counter medication.



Fermented vegetables such as kimchi and sauerkraut are a great way to get probiotics in your diet.



No alcohol

Alcohol Free Weekend

March 30 - April 1, 2018 is Alcohol-Free Weekend, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence. The weekend is promoted to raise public awareness for the ways that alcohol might be affecting individuals or families. Alcohol is a part of many families' celebrations and get-togethers, and the stereotype of moms and dads needing wine at the end of the day can be seen on television and movies. The Alcohol-Free Weekend is a time to reflect on how often we drink, how much we drink, and why we drink.

To participate in Alcohol-Free Weekend, individuals are encouraged to maintain a regular weekend schedule. Visit friends, watch a game on television, spend time with family. The only difference is to abstain from alcohol for the weekend. Pay attention to any situations that give you the urge to drink. Pay attention to people who encourage you to drink. Becoming aware of the triggers in your life regarding alcohol can help you make better decisions about when to drink.

While most people who have a drink on a weekend are not alcoholics, taking the time to recognize our drinking habits can help us better address our health. Alcohol is high in calories and can lead to poor food choices and over eating. Alcohol is processed by the body much like sugar and excessive consumption is linked to diabetes, lowered immunity, poor digestion, gout and inflammation. In addition, drinking alcohol (especially in conjunction with certain medications) can cause serious liver damage. Making well-informed decisions about when and what to drink is an important part of staying healthy.

Visit www.ncadd.org to learn more or to get help.

Produce of the Month

Celery

Celery is often considered the dieter's snack. Low calorie with a great crunch, celery is actually a good anti-inflammatory food and a good source of vitamin K. Celery is an inexpensive and versatile vegetable that has been cultivated since ancient times.

The Basics: Celery can be found at almost any grocery store and many farmer's markets. Choose celery that does not have obvious bruises or discoloration and seems to be firm and moist (though not wet). Store celery in the refrigerator and wash before use. Celery can be eaten raw or cooked, commonly through boiling or steaming. Steaming retains more of the nutrients, so it is a preferred method of cooking.

Try This: Raw celery is delicious and can be dipped in guacamole, hummus, or your favorite nut butter. Raw celery can also add crunch to your favorite salad and slaws. Trying to go low-carb? Instead of a lettuce-wrap, stuff celery stalks with your favorite chicken, egg, tuna, or crab salad or make ants on a log for you and the kids as healthy, protein-packed snack. All parts of the celery are edible. You can chop the celery stalk and leaves and add to soups or stews. Slice and braise your celery using butter or olive oil and vegetable or chicken broth to serve as a side. You can also add celery to stir-fry dishes or roast beef and chicken for added flavor and fiber.

The Facts: One cup of celery is 15 calories and a good source of fiber, vitamin K, and vitamin C.

Safe Sunscreens for Summer

Sunscreen is an important part of sun safety but have you ever thought to stop about the ingredients in the sunscreen you use? Keep reading, to learn more about safe sunscreens and how to choose a non-toxic product for you and your family.

Why Should I Care About the Ingredients in my Sunscreen?

Sunscreens work by absorbing or scattering UV light and contain active ingredients in the form of mineral or chemical light filters. Mineral sunscreens use zinc oxide and or titanium oxide as an active ingredient. Common products with chemical filters usually contain two to six of the following active ingredients: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate, and octinoxate.



Laboratory studies indicate that some chemicals that company's use as UV filters may disrupt hormone function, cause skin allergies, and be linked to cancer. Sunscreen regulations are moving in the right direction but we still need to be aware of what we are putting on our bodies. Remember anything absorbed through the skin goes directly to the bloodstream.

How Can I Find a Safe Sunscreen?

The Environmental Working Group, a non-profit organization concerned with health and the environment, offers a yearly list of recommended sunscreens. In addition, they have an app that includes the latest list. If you are interested in their research and recommendations, search <https://www.ewg.org/sunscreen>.

When choosing a sunscreen, look for a product that contain 30-50 SPF and protects against both UVA and UVB radiation, sometimes referred to as a "broad-spectrum" sunscreen. Mineral based sunscreens that contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are stable in sunlight, offer a protection from both UVA and UVB radiation, and don't often contain harmful additives. If you go with a chemical sunscreen, choose a product with a low toxicity rating; for example, one that avoids oxybenzone, octinoxate and retinyl palmitate. Avoid spray sunscreens; spray sunscreens apply less product to the skin than cream and the spray can be irritating if inhaled. You can also choose a sunscreen that is labelled as "hypoallergenic" and "fragrance free" to prevent exposure to any additional irritants.

Apply sunscreen to all exposed parts of the body, including ears, the back of the neck and the back of the legs about 30 minutes before going outside and reapply about every 2 hours or more often if you are in water or excessively sweating. Applying too little sunscreen is a common cause for sunburns in both children and adults. In addition to applying sunscreen, you can take further precautions to protect your skin from the sun such as wearing a hat, staying out of direct sunlight between 10 – 2, or wearing thin layers to keep skin covered.

Keeping Fit While on Vacation

Traveling can make getting in adequate physical activity difficult. Whether you are taking a road trip or flying to a remote location, there are ways to keep moving while traveling.

Before embarking on your trip, remember to pack appropriate clothing, equipment, and shoes for your workouts. If you are prepared, you are more likely to be motivated. While waiting for your plane or ride, take a walk or do laps around the airport. Easy, inconspicuous activities are great to fit it in without making you feel like you're "working out" in public.

If your lodging has a gym, pool, or other workout facility, utilize the equipment for a classic workout. If that is not an option, check out the many online workout routines, apps, or videos or pack your own exercise DVD to do in your room. If you are tight on space and resources, pick workouts with no or minimal equipment like pushups, planks, and squats. Another option is to jog or walk in the area of your lodging if it is safe and has safe trails or sidewalks.

When traveling long distances by car, remember to take breaks. The appropriate amount of time behind the wheel may vary widely from driver to driver; however, it is reasonable to schedule a break about every 3 hours when driving long distances. This can be used to get a drink, stretch your body, and take a quick walk to get your blood flowing. Don't forget that sitting for long periods of time without movement can cause an individual to feel sleepy or unfocused. If you are driving or navigating, a quick walk every so often keeps the blood flowing in our brains and keeps us sharp.

Plan an active vacation. Make your travels active by taking walking tours rather than bus tours, active sight-seeing rather than passive shows, and taking adventurous excursions over lazy days. Taking a stroll on the beach is another great way to stay active. You might also choose to do 10 squats whenever you think about it if you're having a less active day. You might choose to plank against surfaces as you wait to check in to your lodging or pick up your meal.

Lastly, don't forget to eat well and drink plenty of water. Keep up with healthy food choices and pack healthy snacks to ensure that your body feels fueled well each day. Make a mindset shift that traveling doesn't always mean sitting around all day and eating everything in sight. Traveling can be adventurous, healthy, and active too!



Spring Always Comes: Renewal Inside and Out

A message from your Healthy U @ Work Wellness Champion:

Pamela Johnson, BS, HHP-AADP, CFMP, RYT



Spring always comes. These are comforting words when overwhelmed by stress, managing a chronic illness or feeling stuck in a negative situation. Spring reminds us that things do change. Renewal happens no matter how harsh a winter has been, and we can count on seeing bright green buds and pink blossoms again.

The changing season is an example of the cycles that are ongoing and happen without our input. We have cycles and seasons within our physical form as well. Much of it is directed by the autonomic (or automatic) nervous system without our effort. Our bodies are constantly regenerating and renewing cells, organs and bones and more. The lining of stomach and intestines are replaced every 2-9 days. The outer layer of skin is replaced every 2 to 4 weeks. Red blood cells are replaced every 4 months. Every 10 years we have a new skeleton. Every 15 years muscles are refreshed. (1) (2)

From a functional medicine perspective, we know all systems of the body are inter-related. The messengers of the endocrine and nervous system in addition to the gut-brain connection, which is part of the enteric nervous system, are all working together. So, rather than treat symptoms in isolation by taking a medication for a specific chronic condition, the functional medicine approach addresses system-wide inflammation which enables healing on many fronts. Inflammation is the root cause of many chronic conditions that impair these systems.

How to Jumpstart Your Spring Renewal

We reduce inflammation by restoring the detoxification system which works to remove the old and affects regeneration the new. The core of functional medicine protocols is to providing the nutrients that enable this system to work optimally.

1. As a country, we are deficient across the board in healthy omega 3 fatty acids, magnesium and some B vitamins. Adding nutrient-dense food becomes a top priority as we learn how these deficiencies can impair the detoxification system and how essential nutrients become the building blocks for the ongoing regeneration of our cells.
2. Clean food choices, free of toxic pesticides, additives, and preservatives, also become a priority when we learn how altered foods affect the symphony systems that are always seeking balance.
3. As important as nutrients are to our wellbeing, our thoughts and emotions can also create a host of toxicity affecting the health of our systems. Since we often cannot control our thoughts or emotions, this can be a frightening concept. Being mindful of our thoughts and dealing with our emotions instead of suppressing them can help.
4. If we can make ourselves physically sick with stress, it is important to know that we have the ability to intervene. We can stop the ravages of stress with simple breathing techniques and by practicing meditation; during these activities our body produces healing chemicals rather than toxic ones. These soothing chemicals actually boost the immune system and improve chronic disease states.

With all that is unfolding before us this spring, let it remind us of the renewal happening within our bodies and the ability we have to heal.

(1) <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/07/understanding-how-the-intestine-replaces-and-repairs-itself/>

(2) <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/06/28/483732115/how-old-is-your-body-really>



Q: Hey Erin! I've been dealing with a chronic knee injury for the last few years and the last time I worked out on a regular basis at a gym I really hurt it. I haven't been back since because I am scared and nervous about hurting myself again. Do you have any suggestions on how to get past the nerves and how to prevent another injury?

Abigail T.

A: Thank you for reaching out about this subject. As a fitness studio owner and personal trainer, I deal with this type of situation regularly. When someone comes to see us after dealing with a chronic injury, whether it is from working out or not, I know it can be intimidating and nerve wracking. These individuals always seem to be skeptical or skittish toward working out and even trusting someone to help them correctly and not get hurt again. No one can guarantee there isn't a chance you could injure yourself again but there are many things you can try to do to prevent it.

The first thing I would recommend before finding a facility to start back working out is make an appointment with a doctor or physical therapist to see what caused or is causing this injury. They should give you some direction on what is going on and things you can and cannot do so keep that in mind as you return to working out.

If you already have seen someone and know the cause, then it's time to find the right facility for you. Start your research on the gyms you may like to join. Make sure it is a place you feel comfortable and have the personnel to help you if needed. If you decide to work with a personal trainer (which I highly recommend to get started), please find out their background and experience. I recommend working with someone experienced in the field or someone who has worked with your type of injury before.

Once you find the place or the person to workout with, start back slowly. If you are feeling good with no pain, that doesn't mean you should go in and hit it hard especially if it's been a while. Also, when starting back remember there may be a chance you will feel some discomfort in the affected area but know the difference between discomfort and pain.

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Ask The Trainer

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If it's painful STOP!!! Do not try to push through, maybe you aren't ready to do whatever movement you were trying to start with. That is where working with a professional comes in, someone to make sure you are doing things correctly and personalize the workout to you and your body. There are so many exercises and workouts out there you can do that won't cause you pain and that will help you build the strength you need to prevent a knee injury again. Listen to the professionals you decide to work with and be patient with the process, give it time.

A few other preventive measures as you start working out again would be to 1) ice the affected area as a precaution after a workout, 2) make sure you work on your flexibility, and 3) eat healthy. These can all help your situation.

I hope this helps as you get ready to start working out again. If you have any more questions I would be more than happy to help!

Dedicated to your success,

Erin M Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT



Remember RICE

The RICE protocol is recommended as soon as possible after an injury to help relieve pain and swelling and promote healing and flexibility.

- **Rest** the injured area and apply splint or supportive tape if needed.
- **Ice** or apply a cold compress to the injury to reduce pain, bruising, and swelling. Ice for 10 minutes then removed ice for 10 minutes. Repeat.
- **Compression** helps reduce swelling and blood flow to affected area by wrapping the injured area in an elastic bandage.
- **Elevation** helps reduce internal bleeding and stop pain and throbbing in injured area. Lift the injured area above your heart whenever possible, not just when icing.

Want to Know More? Contact Working Well for more information on wellness programs and how they can help you reduce healthcare costs and improve employee wellness.



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