

# Healthy U @ Work

February 2019

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Seasonal Affective Disorder, Limes	2
Vitamin D	3
Shorter Workouts and Better Results with Interval Training	4
Ask the Trainer: Why Haven't I Dropped Another Dress Size?	5
Dealing with an Anxious and/or Agitated Individual	6



## Stay Connected for Better Health

Having a strong social support is good for emotional and physical health!

Research reports that a good social support system can help lower blood pressure and fight depression, even during times of conflict and stress.

A strong social support can also help individuals follow medical advice and make healthy lifestyle choices. Patients with good support are more likely to keep doctor's appointments, take prescribed medications, and keep track of important health data, such as weight, blood pressure, blood sugars, and waist size. Additionally, friends and family can help individuals make good lifestyle choices that are heart healthy like eating a healthier diet, getting regular exercise, and quitting smoking.

It's important to note that some friends and family can have the opposite effect, encouraging less healthy behaviors. If this is the case, just changing when and where one socializes can help. For example, rather than going out to dinner with someone who might encourage ordering fried appetizers and alcohol, choose to go out for coffee.

Skipping a late-night outing for a morning walk is another good idea. Making healthy changes can be hard, and having friends and family who are supportive can make it much easier.

Heart health is critical to day to day life, and a healthy lifestyle is critical to heart health. It doesn't matter if the support system is a large group or one good friend. Having someone who supports healthy behaviors can make all the difference. Happy Valentine's Day!





## Seasonal Affective Disorder

For some people, the winter season brings a pervasive “blue” mood that can feel hard to shake. As the days lose sunlight, a type of depression can set in called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). While it is common for most of us to long for sunnier, warmer days, those who suffer with Seasonal Affective Disorder experience any or all of the following symptoms: loss of energy, changes in sleep patterns, weight gain, anxiety, and depression.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is believed to be caused by a reduction in sunlight that affects serotonin levels (a brain chemical that affects mood), melatonin production (a hormone related to depression) and our circadian rhythm or “inner clock” that regulates our sleep cycle.

There are things we can do at home that can help beat the winter blues and help those with Seasonal Affective Disorder as well:

- Let the light in! Open the curtains or blinds and bring in as much natural light as possible.
- Get outside. Even just a short time each day can make a real difference.
- Exercise and eat right. Regular exercise helps reduce the effects of stress and anxiety and releases feel good hormones called endorphins. Eating healthy whole foods like fruit, vegetables, and quality lean protein help to maintain your blood sugar levels.
- Make plans. Get together with friends and family, or plan a trip during the winter months.
- Reduce stress. Try meditation or journaling and ask for help with chores or work when possible.
- Try light therapy. Consider purchasing a light therapy box – an indoor lamp designed to help treat SAD (shown above).

## Produce of the Month Limes

Limes are a quality citrus fruit that is a good source of vitamin C. Limes contain pectin, known to lower cholesterol levels, and may reduce the risk of heart disease. In addition, their fiber and nutrients may reduce the risk of cancer and act as an anti-inflammatory.

**The Basics:** Choose limes that are heavy for their size, bright in color, and do not have soft spots or discolorations. Store them in the refrigerator and wash prior to using. You can use the zest of the lime or peel the lime and use it in your favorite recipes. Add lime juice to your water to improve digestion, lower blood sugar and reduce inflammation while staying hydrated. To cut the perfect lime wedge, slice about a quarter inch off of each end of your lime. Then cut the fruit in half, lengthwise. Set one of the halves cut side-down on your cutting board and angle your knife to cut your lime several times lengthwise to get perfect wedges to add to your drink or recipe.

**Try this:** Lime is a natural pairing with spicy foods. Make a rub for chicken or pork using chili powder or cayenne pepper, minced garlic, salt, pepper, and the juice of a small lime. Swap out lemon in your lemon bar recipe and use lime juice and lime zest.

**The Facts:** A small lime has 20 calories and is low in sugar. Limes are a good source of minerals like magnesium and potassium.



# Vitamin D

Vitamin D has been the subject of a great deal of research lately, and the findings have been surprising and encouraging. Vitamin D functions much like a hormone and is key to calcium absorption and overall health. Vitamin D is linked to reduced risk of colon and breast cancer, depression, diabetes, chronic skin conditions, thyroid imbalance and high blood pressure. Vitamin D is also important in the prevention and treatment of conditions like asthma, heart disease, and autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis and inflammatory bowel diseases.

Called the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D is a hot topic during the cold and often dark winter months. If you are considering taking vitamin D (or increasing your dose), here's what you should know.

- Vitamin D reduces inflammation and improves your immune system.
- Vitamin D is made in the body through exposure to sunlight. Health professionals recommend 20-30 minutes of direct sunlight each day before applying sunscreen to help promote healthy vitamin D levels.
- Vitamin D can be found in eggs, fatty fish like tuna and salmon, cheese and fortified milk and juice.
- Get your vitamin D levels checked before starting any supplements. Getting your levels rechecked after 6 months or a year can tell you if your levels are improving with sunlight, nutrition, or supplementation.
- Dosage amounts range from 400-2000 mg per day, depending on your age, sun exposure, and your current diet.
- Many calcium supplements also contain vitamin D, so be aware before taking additional amounts. Too much vitamin D can result in vitamin D toxicity, causing vomiting, fatigue, and, possibly, calcium stones.

Talk with your doctor about your vitamin D levels and whether taking supplements is right for you.



# Shorter Workouts and Better Results with Interval Training

If you have been doing cardio but not getting results, interval training may be your answer. If you struggle finding the time for exercise, this is also a perfect place to start. In just 20 minutes, you can boost metabolism, increase your cardiovascular health and build strength.

Interval training describes any workout where you alternate between intense bursts of activity and fixed periods of less-intense activity or even complete rest.

For beginners, interval training should focus on short bursts of intensity within a moderate workout. For example:

- Walk at a brisk pace for 4 minutes and switch to a moderate pace for 2 minutes. Then repeat.
- Try jogging for 4 minutes and walking for 2 minutes. Then repeat.
- Run as fast as you can for 1 minute and then jog for 3 minutes. Then repeat.

As your fitness level improves, you can begin to lengthen the intense segments and shorten the moderate segments. You can work up to 8 intervals of 20 seconds all-out intensity exercise followed by 10 seconds of rest for a quick and effective workout.

**How does interval training work?** Many of us think if we just work out longer, we will see more results, but, like us, our bodies are smart. As we continue to log miles, our bodies become more efficient and are able to use less energy and burn fewer calories. Long distance



cardiovascular exercise has been linked to decreased testosterone levels and raise cortisol levels which can stimulate appetite, fat storage, and slow recovery.

When we push the gas pedal and pick up speed for short intervals our body becomes less efficient and has to burn more calories to do the same activity. Interval training enables you to burn more fat and build powerful muscle. In a 2012 study, a group of cyclists who did 8 second sprints followed by 12 second of easy cycling lost three times the fat as the group who did continuous cycling at a regular pace for 40 minutes.

As always, start your workout with a warm up, end with a cool down and talk to your doctor before beginning a new fitness regimen.

## Seasonal Affective Disorder

*Continued from page 2*

If these tips do not improve your mood within two weeks or your mood worsens, make an appointment with your doctor or see if you can get free counseling from your employer's Employee Assistance Program. No matter the season, you can feel better. Make the changes necessary and get the support you need.



## Ask the Trainer

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

**Q:** Hi Erin. I have lost over 30 pounds this last year but have only dropped 1 dress size. I would have thought that I would have gone down at least 2 or 3 dress sizes with losing that amount of weight. Don't get me wrong my clothes fit better but I would really like to go down another size or two. Do you have any thoughts on why I haven't dropped down more sizes?

Karen W.

**A:** Karen, first off, congratulations on your weight loss! That is amazing and a great accomplishment. You should be very proud of yourself.

Sometimes going by the dress size isn't the best way to measure your success. One thing you have to remember when it comes to dress size is that they fluctuate based on the brand. If you go to one store and try on a size 10 and it fits great, you could go to another store and possibly fit into a size 8 or a size 12. Another thing to consider is that the dress size you were wearing may not be accurate anymore. If you have been wearing the same size 12 pants for a few years, they have most likely stretched out a bit and may not be the correct size any more. You may have actually been in a size 14 rather than a 12 meaning if you are down to a size 10 you did actually drop 2 sizes. Regardless, concentrate on the fact that you worked really hard and lost 30 pounds, your clothes are fitting better, and you are hopefully feeling better!

If you still want to see changes in your body, like drop a few more pounds and another size or two, you may want to change up what you were doing. If your weight loss has plateaued, this is a great time to mix up your activity routine. If you haven't been strength training that is a great way to change your figure and slim down along with plenty of cardio. If you aren't already, focus on eating a clean diet filled with vegetables, fruits and quality protein and minimize add sugars and processed foods. Not knowing exactly what you did to lose the weight, I cannot give you specific recommendations on what you should do to trim down and drop another size. Thank you for reaching out and best of luck in the future!

Dedicated to your success,

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

## *10 Tips for Dealing with an Anxious and/or Agitated Individual*



Creating a culture of caring and compassion starts with each and every single one of us! Similar to physical pain from an injury that you can visually see, emotional pain also has symptoms. These symptoms manifest into certain behaviors that can be observed. If someone is presenting with behaviors that are anxious and/or agitated, the best approach you can take is to display compassion to the individual as they are most likely experiencing emotional pain.

You did not cause the person's pain, and you may not be able to control for the set of circumstances that caused it, but you can control how you respond to the individual. Do not take the behaviors personally, but proceed with compassionate and caring actions. As long as you are safe and you are not in harm's way, the Crisis Prevention Institute or CPI recommends the following 10 de-escalation tips:

1. **Be empathic and nonjudgmental, use reflective listening.**
2. **Respect personal space.**
3. **Monitor your own body language.**
4. **Avoid overreacting; remain calm.**
5. **Focus on the feelings.**
6. **Ignore challenging questions and focus on the facts.**
7. **Set limits or provide options, while stating the positive option first.**
8. **Choose wisely what you insist upon.**
9. **Allow silence for reflection.**
10. **Allow time for decisions.**

***Need help with dealing with anxious and/or angry individuals?***

***Call 219-662-3730 or 1-800-747-7262***

EAP Webinar on 10 Tips for Dealing with an Anxious and/or Agitated Individual and Know your Numbers on  
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