Your Health & Well-Being

Workplace Partners for wellness & good health

OCTOBER 2008

How Stress Affects Your Health

Did You Know?

If you wake up every morning and immediately rush, you've already laid the foundation for a stressful day. Providing time for exercise or quiet meditation before work can reduce the stress build-up for the day. Other effective stress-busters include:

- Getting adequate sleep.
- Consuming less caffeine.
- Performing relaxation techniques, including positive visualization and meditation.
- Taking "stress breaks" throughout the day, such as short walks or reading inspirational messages/affirmations.
- Eating right, including foods high in vitamin C to boost your immune system.

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. Stress is a normal part of life. Many events that happen to you and around you – and many things that you do to yourself – put stress on your body. Some stress can be good. It keeps us alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger. But too much stress can make us sick. And unrelenting stress can turn to distress.

Distress – a negative stress reaction – can disturb the body's internal balance or equilibrium, leading to physical symptoms such as headaches, an upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain, sexual dysfunction, and problems sleeping. Emotional problems can also result from distress. These problems include depression, panic attacks and other forms of anxiety and worry. Stress is linked to six of the leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide.

Stress also becomes harmful when people engage in the compulsive use of substances or behaviors to try to relieve their stress. These substances or behaviors may include food, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gambling, sex, shopping and the Internet. Rather than relieving the stress and returning the body to a relaxed state, these substances and compulsive behaviors tend to keep the body in a stressed state causing more problems. The distressed person becomes trapped in a vicious circle.

How can I relieve stress?

The best ways to relieve stress are different for each person. Try some of these ideas to see which ones work for you:

Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking is a great way to get started. Learn ways to relax your body – try breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises like tai chi and qi gong.

Practice "being in the moment." Try meditation, imagery exercises or self-hypnosis. Listen to relaxing music and try to look for humor – laughter really can be the best medicine.

Keep a "stress journal." Get a notebook and write down when something makes you feel stressed. Then write how you reacted and what you did to deal with the stress. Keeping a stress journal can help you find out what is causing your stress and how much stress you feel. Then you can take steps to reduce the stress or handle it better.

Ask for help. Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone. It can help to talk to a friend or family member, but you may also want to see a counselor.

Source: WebMD®

Turn to myCIGNA.com for Facts and Guidance

Did you know that CIGNA can help you find simple, effective ways to help you manage your health and get appropriate, effective care? Did you also know that we've placed all this information in one convenient place?

Take some time to get to know the tools and resources on myCIGNA.com. It will help you make more thoughtful health care choices and feel good about the decisions you make.

Let us help...

- ***If you need inpatient surgery,*** visit myCIGNA.com to learn how hospitals rank by number of procedures

continued >

813035 10/07

performed, average length of stay and cost.

- *If you want help losing weight,* visit Healthwise® to find articles on exercise, nutrition and weight control. And learn how to take advantage of Healthy Rewards® discounts* on fitness club memberships and weight management programs.
- *If you want to quit smoking,* visit Healthy Rewards® to learn about discounts on smoking cessation programs that will help you reach your goal.
- *If you want to better understand medications and costs,* visit DrugCompare™ to learn the characteristics of more than 200 common drugs. You can also use myCIGNA to compare prescription drug costs at area pharmacies.

This is only the beginning. Get to know myCIGNA.com better and see how its programs and tools can help guide you and your family to better health.

Source: CIGNA HealthCare Well-Being

How to Keep Your Heart Healthy

Did you know that heart disease is the leading cause of death for U.S. adults? But there is also some good news. According to the American Heart Association® (AHA), the rate of death from heart disease is declining because many people now pay more attention to taking care of their heart. Knowing the causes and risk factors for heart disease can help you prevent it and keep your heart healthy.

Know your risk

Several factors may increase your risk for heart disease.

- Are you over age 65?
- Do you have a family history of heart disease?
- Do you smoke?
- Is your total cholesterol level over 240?
- Is your blood pressure level over 140/90?
- Do you exercise less than 30 minutes a day on most days of the week?
- Are you overweight?

If you answered yes to at least two of these questions, you may have a higher risk of developing heart disease.

Then lower your risk

Although you can't change your age or family history, many risk factors are within your control. The AHA suggests taking the following steps to help keep your heart strong and healthy:

Quit smoking. According to the AHA, your risk for a heart attack doubles if you smoke. And if you do have a heart attack, smoking increases the risk of it being deadly. Talk with your doctor about how to become a nonsmoker.

Watch your diet. Simple changes in your diet can significantly lower your risk for heart disease. Aim for a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet with lots of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods. Eating these foods can help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and help you maintain a healthy weight.

Get moving. Regular exercise strengthens your heart, improves circulation and works with your diet to help you maintain a healthy weight. The AHA recommends that healthy adults get 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as jogging, swimming or walking, on most days of the week. Check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Visit your doctor. Your doctor can help you identify early symptoms of heart disease with certain tests and screenings. See your doctor regularly to help monitor your risk.

* Healthy Rewards® is a discount program. Some Healthy Rewards programs are not available in all states. If your CIGNA HealthCare plan includes coverage for any of these services, this program is in addition to, not instead of, your plan benefits. Healthy Rewards programs are separate from your medical benefits. **A discount program is NOT insurance, and the member must pay the entire discounted charge.**

"CIGNA" and "CIGNA HealthCare" refer to various operating subsidiaries of CIGNA Corporation. Products and services are provided by these operating subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. These operating subsidiaries include Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Tel-Drug, Inc. and its affiliates, CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., Intracorp, and HMO or service company subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation and CIGNA Dental Health, Inc. In Arizona, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Arizona, Inc. In California, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of California, Inc. In Connecticut, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of Connecticut, Inc. In Virginia, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare Mid-Atlantic, Inc. In North Carolina, HMO plans are offered by CIGNA HealthCare of North Carolina, Inc. All other medical plans in these states are insured or administered by Connecticut General Life Insurance Company.

CIGNA®

© 2007 CIGNA

813035 10/07