

HEALTH Matters

Work Towards Workplace Wellness

Health is not everything, but without health, everything is nothing (Schopenhauer, 1788-1860, German philosopher).

Good health is not just taking care of yourself at home, but also practicing it at work, where millions of people spend more than one-third of their day's time. Here are some useful tips to practice healthy habits at workplace.

Food at work

- Pack a nutritious lunch from home which lessens the temptation to eat high-fat, high-calorie, high-sodium fast foods
- Keep healthy snacks at your desk so that you can easily and readily shun all unhealthy food cravings
- Keep your water bottle within reach as people often tend to forget about drinking water on a busy working day
- Limit caffeine use; restrict yourself to not more than 3 cups of coffee a day



Activity at work

- Consider cycling or walking to the office; take the stairs instead of elevators
- Get out of the office and take a stroll around your neighborhood during lunch break
- Place the printer at some distance from your desk
- Need to talk to a colleague? Walk to his / her desk instead of using the phone or e-mail



Ergonomics at work

- Ensure your workplace equipment is at the optimal position to prevent repetitive strain injuries
- Position the monitor directly in front of you to avoid excessive twisting of the neck
- Keyboard, mouse and phone should be close to you to avoid excessive and extended reaching
- Sit upright in the chair with your lower back against the backrest

Stress at work

- Avoid stressful situations, such as morning traffic; use public transport instead
- Learn to say 'no' if you feel that agreeing to a task would overburden you
- Resist the urge to smoke or drink alcohol because of stress and peer pressure
- Attain a healthy work-life balance; leave work at work and make time for family and friends



Healthy lifestyle habits are contagious. Have a **'Wellness Buddy'** at work and the two of you could motivate and encourage one another to inculcate good practices in your daily wellness routine.

Editor Speak

We thank you for your overwhelming response to the monthly newsletter, Health Matters. Your feedback has been constantly encouraging us to work harder and strive to deliver quality service to loyal customers like you.

Health is strongly influenced by the everyday environments that people live, work and play in. It affects the well-being of an individual as well as their families. Prevention is a healthy practice; that's why we encourage wellness at work and 'Wellness Day', is the right time to get started.

With an increase in levels of stress and emotional imbalance, eating disorders are on the rise. The article 'To Eat or Not to Eat' throws some light on the causes, consequences and management of eating disorders.

Laughter is the best medicine and it has sparked off a world-wide revolution. We unfold the reason behind it with some laughter tips to follow at work and home.

There are a lot of myths surrounding cancer and on this 'World Cancer Day' we dispel damaging misconceptions about it.

Please write to us with feedback and suggestions about the newsletter at editorial@vidalhealth.com





To Eat or Not to Eat?



If you were to witness teenagers in a restaurant order a scrumptious meal and gulp down their food hungrily except one girl who barely eats; would you think she isn't hungry or that she's suffering from an eating disorder?

There are many people to whom food is not about hunger, but weight. They are insecure about their body and deal with it by either eating a lot or very little, or sometimes not at all. This excessive behavior constitutes an eating disorder. It first begins as an uncontrollable urge to eat small or large amounts of food. Men and women across age groups are susceptible to it. An eating disorder often develops during teenage years and young adulthood.

While the exact cause is unknown, it usually surfaces with other complications such as anxiety disorder, substance abuse and depression. Some of the common causes include:

- **Genetics:** If it runs in the family, one's chances of developing an eating disorder are high.
- **Psychological and emotional imbalance:** One's obsession with perfection, low self-esteem, troubled relationships and change of job, college or city could lead to excessive or controlled eating.
- **Societal norms:** Media's wrongful depiction of a 'thin' body as the 'in-thing' and peer pressure reinforces the desire to lose a lot of weight within a very short period.
- **Athletics and work activities:** A professional dancer, runner, gymnast, actor, athlete or model may be encouraged by parents and coaches to lose weight.

Before indulging in excessive food or pushing the plate away, one should step back and reflect on the damage caused. Low-self esteem, depression and sometimes suicidal tendencies are psychological effects of an eating disorder, causing:

Dehydration

Low or high blood pressure

Lack of menstruation (amenorrhea)

Stunted growth

Loss of bone minerals

Kidney damage, heart trouble and multiple organ failure

Death (in extreme cases)

Eating disorders are commonly categorised as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating.

Anorexia Nervosa

This is a condition wherein a meal is left unfinished or untouched due to the constant fear of gaining weight. One's perceived notion of being 'fat' is the cause for the fear of weight gain.

Bulimia Nervosa

The urge to gorge on large amounts of food without knowing when to stop brings on guilt and fear of weight gain, thus leading to purging (by self-induced vomiting, laxatives or excessive exercising). This behavior is termed bulimia nervosa and in this case, unlike anorexia nervosa, some maintain their normal weight while others become overweight.

Binge Eating

The uncontrollable desire to eat hordes of junk food even if the stomach is full, is called binge eating. Unlike bulimia nervosa, the strong need to purge is absent. Sometimes coupled with guilt and embarrassment, another round of binge eating begins. A person might be of normal weight, overweight or obese.

Treatments are subjective and include psychotherapy, mental health therapy, medication and in severe cases, hospitalization.

Psychotherapy: Here, one is encouraged to change their unhealthy habits into healthy ones.

Nutrition education and weight-restoration program: In cases of extreme weight loss, the doctor designs a healthy diet plan to help one gain weight.

Medication: To control the urge of binge eating, purging or extreme obsession with food, medication is sometimes recommended.

Hospitalization: If one suffers from severe health issues, refuses to gain weight or eat, doctors recommend hospitalization.

Here are a few tips that may keep one from indulging in unhealthy eating:

- Be in the company of encouraging family and friends
- Control the desire to constantly look at the mirror or check weight
- Keep away from misleading portrayal of normal weight in the media
- Journal your feelings and eating behaviour to deal with unknown problem areas

Food is nutrition for the body, mind and soul but due to some issues, it can become a cause for distress. A healthy attitude coupled with love of near and dear ones can turn food back to what it is meant to be – wholesome nourishment.





Nothing crooked about laugh lines

“Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward,” said Kurt Vonnegut and we agree with him. Don’t believe it? Head over to the laughter group when you go for a walk in the park tomorrow. And you’ll see that the absurdity of strangers gathered together to laugh for no particular reason is tingling your funny bone as well. And viola! Just like that you would’ve experienced, even if it’s just for a few seconds, laughter therapy.

Laughter is the best medicine they say. Laughter yoga, developed by Dr. Madan Kataria, has sparked off a laughter revolution around the globe. Laughter is not only a full-on exercise routine for the muscles; it also releases the body’s ‘happy hormone’ – endorphins. These hormones make great defenders against stress. Here’s the best part, the reason laughter groups work is because the body can’t tell the difference between real and fake laughter. So any giggle, chuckle, chortle or deep-belly laugh will do the trick!

No laughing matter

Here’s the proof. Dr. Lee Berk of Loma University Medical Center has been conducting research on laughter therapy for almost three decades. His research shows that the level of cortisol, a hormone released by our body under stress, decreases drastically after an hour-long laughter session. What’s more, laughter builds the body’s level of natural killer cells – a type of immunity cell that fights viruses and tumor cells. Research done at the University of Michigan has also concluded that just 20 seconds of laughter can be as good for your lungs as three minutes spent rowing. And here you were thinking that there is no such thing as a 20-second workout!

Everybody loves a good laugh

We tend to underestimate the power laughter has to bring and keep people together. Laughter is a catalyst for positive emotions that establishes a strong and healthy emotional bond in relationships. Sharing laughter invigorates your youthfulness, joy and resilience.

A word of caution: Laughter therapy can be strenuous, leaving some people feeling light-headed. A doctor’s consultation is recommended before you take up laughter therapy, especially if you suffer from hernias, glaucoma or hemorrhoids, if you’ve had a recent surgery, or if you’re pregnant.

Work or play – keep those frowns away

Here are a few things you can do to keep the good times rolling:

- Laugh with your family for at least 5-10 minutes each morning
- Find the lighter side to serious situations and share it with people around you
- Consciously smile at your partner or spouse, more often
- Laughter can be a fun war! Have a laughter match to see who can be the loudest and longest
- Tell each other some jokes!
- You don’t have to leave those giggles behind when at work
- Work projects can be fun. Give them some silly names to get the ball rolling
- Laugh with your colleagues for a few minutes for no reason at all

On that note...

*Laughing with no reason is not treason
Laughter brings spring to all seasons
Giggle, chuckle or guffaw
Make laughing every day a law
If not anything else, just these silly lines
Will bring on smiles*



Cancer- Did You Know?

Ever wondered why cancer is called so? The etymology of cancer - a Latin word 'Cancrum' which means 'crab'. A crab holds on to its prey firmly before killing it. Similarly, cancer also holds on to a tissue or an organ wherein, abnormal cells divide without control and are able to invade other tissues through the blood and lymph systems. It affects everyone, be it the young and old, the rich and poor, men, women and children - posing a huge burden on patients, families and societies.

Did you know...

- Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 7.6 million deaths (around 13% of all deaths) in 2008
- Lung, stomach, liver, colon and breast cancer cause the most number of cancer deaths each year
- About 30% of cancer deaths are due to behavioral and dietary risks
- Tobacco use is the most important risk factor for cancer causing 22% of global cancer deaths and 71% of global lung cancer deaths

What can I do to reduce the burden?

The most important thing to reduce the burden of cancer is to create awareness. There are multiple ways to do so:

Edutainment on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter

Collaborate with NGOs and other community awareness events

Distribution of posters and t-shirts within the corporate community

World Cancer Day, celebrated on 4th February every year is a great platform for awareness campaigns. This year's theme is 'Dispelling damaging myths and misconceptions about cancer' under the heading 'Cancer - Did you know?'.

Cancer Myths

Myth 1: Cancer is just a health issue

Truth: Cancer is not just a health issue. It has wide-reaching social, economic, developmental and human rights implications.

Myth 2: Cancer is a disease of the wealthy and elderly in developed countries

Truth: Cancer does not discriminate. It is a global epidemic, affecting all ages, with low and middle-income countries bearing a disproportionate burden.

Myth 3: Cancer is a death sentence

Truth: Many cancers that were once considered to have been a death sentence can now be cured. For many more people, cancer now be treated effectively.

Myth 4: Cancer is my fate

Truth: With the right strategies, more than one in every three cancers can be prevented.

Source: worldcancerday.org

Modifiable Risk Factors

- Tobacco use
- Being overweight or obese
- Unhealthy diet with low fruit and vegetable intake
- Lack of physical activity
- Alcohol use
- Sexually transmitted human papilloma virus infection
- Urban air pollution

Sample Cancer Tweet

Did you know that cancer kills more people than HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB combined? Check this out [insert link] #xyz

Sample Facebook Post

Today I learnt that cancer is not only a disease of the elderly; most of the 750,000 cervical and breast cancer deaths per year occur during a woman's reproductive years

Get Quizzed!

Join the letters horizontally, vertically or diagonally in the table to form 4 meaningful words taken from the articles.

X	H	I	B	H	S	W	I
Z	Q	O	F	T	V	E	O
A	W	P	R	Y	B	R	P
P	R	E	G	M	N	T	A
L	S	A	H	Z	O	Y	S
S	Y	S	J	X	M	N	D
A	I	M	I	L	U	B	E
O	I	D	K	C	Q	U	F



E-mail your answers to healthmatters@vidalhealth.com