

# Wellness Works

Spring 2013

## Exercising Caution

Your nose is stuffy, you're sneezing and your throat feels scratchy. Yet, you hate to miss your morning run. Will exercising help your symptoms or make you feel worse?

Experts recommend that you do a neck check to help you decide:

**Above-the-neck symptoms mean moderate exercise is OK.** If your symptoms are limited to a runny nose, sore throat or sneezing, you probably just have a cold. In one study, researchers found that moderate exercise, such as brisk walking, did not make cold symptoms worse or make colds last longer. But don't overdo it: No 10-mile runs until you're feeling better. And remember to drink plenty of fluids.

**Below-the-neck symptoms mean no exercise for today and probably not for several days.** Ask yourself these questions: Am I extremely tired or weak? Are the lymph glands at the side of my neck swollen? Do I have a fever? Do my muscles ache? Do I have a chest cough? Do I have vomiting or diarrhea?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may have a more serious infection. Experts recommend that you skip working out until your symptoms clear up. Once you're healthy again, keep exercising. Studies indicate that maintaining an exercise program may help lower your chance of catching colds and flu.

Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health



## Use Your Head — Don't Bruise Your Brain

Here's a heads up: Studies show that about 1.7 million people suffer a traumatic brain injury (TBI) each year. TBIs can be mild, such as a concussion. They can also cause harm that results in death. The bump, jolt or fall that causes a TBI can change the way your brain works.

What can you do to protect your brain? Try these tips to stay safe:

- Wear a helmet during sports, horseback riding, bicycling and other actions that can lead to falls or hard impact.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs when driving or playing sports.
- Wear a seatbelt in a car.
- Use proper safety seats, booster seats or seatbelts for children.
- Remove tripping or falling hazards.
- Set up guards on windows and safety gates on stairs to keep children from falling.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



BlueCross BlueShield  
of Texas





## Getting Enough Shut-Eye

Lack of sleep makes it harder to get through your day. And in the long run, it can harm your health. These tips from the National Sleep Foundation and the American Sleep Association can help you sleep better:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Try to go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day.
- Have a relaxing routine before going to bed. Meditate, read or listen to quiet music to help you wind down. Don't watch TV in bed.
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark and quiet. Turn the thermostat down and cover windows.
- Avoid caffeine after noon. Alcohol, smoking and eating a large meal too close to bedtime also interfere with sleep.
- If you're sleepy during the day, it's OK to take a short nap. But avoid napping close to bedtime.
- Keep a sleep diary, a written log of when you sleep and how you feel. Record when you go to bed and rise. Keep track of how long it takes for you to fall asleep and how often you wake. Rate how tired you are during the day. Be sure to keep the diary for at least 10 days. Then compare the amount of sleep you get with how much energy you have.

If you are still having trouble sleeping or don't feel rested when you wake up, talk with your doctor. The right treatment can help you sail off to dreamland.



## Address Your Stress

A little anxiety is normal, but too much can take a toll on your health, your job and your life.

Don't let stress affect your well-being. Instead, try some of these stress-busting tips:

- Make time for yourself. Balance your work and family life. Develop a network of supportive friends and coworkers, and cultivate a more positive and relaxed outlook.
- Take breaks or a short walk to recharge.
- Blow off steam. Walk away or count to 10 if you're angry or upset. You may view the situation differently if you take time to calm down.
- Focus on your physical health. Eat right, exercise regularly and get enough sleep.
- Make a list of the tasks you need to do and prioritize them. You won't have to worry about forgetting anything important, and you'll feel a sense of accomplishment as you cross off each item.
- Relax. Learn meditation, yoga or other stress-reduction techniques. Practice them at home or during short breaks at work.

Learning to tame stress can help you enhance many areas of your life.

Sources: American Psychological Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



## You Might Be Drinking Your Calories

During the past few decades, the amount of calories consumed has increased in the United States. How have calories from drinks added to this upswing? Researchers looked at four national surveys of food and drink intake from over a span of 37 years. They found that by 2002, caloric intake from drinks had increased from an average of 236 calories per day to 458 calories each day. Soda, alcohol and fruit drinks were the main source of the extra calories. Study authors note that excess calories from drinks may be adding to rising obesity rates.

Source: Obesity Journal