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There is evidence that stress and negative emotion have a worsening effect on a broad range of health conditions. **This means that possessing good coping tools for dealing with the stress in one's daily life is essential to sustaining good physical health—as well as for maintaining emotional resilience—in the long run.** Humor provides one effective tool (among others) for supporting physical and emotional well-being . . . and it NOT TOO LATE to improve your sense of humor to get these benefits into your own life.



Wellness Corner Connection

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO

Do You Have A Sense of Humor?

The answer to this question could impact your health. Although there is no hard core evidence that laughter alone will cure a disease, it can be proven to improve our health to better deal with other morbidities. The old adage "Laughter is the best medicine" does have some truth. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. As children, we used to laugh hundreds of times a day, but as adults life tends to be more serious and laughter more infrequent. By seeking out more opportunities for humor and laughter, though, you can improve your emotional health, strengthen your relationships, find greater happiness—and even add years to your life. .

Laughter is a powerful antidote to stress, pain and conflict. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hopes, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It also helps you to release anger and be more forgiving. The ability to laugh easily and frequently is a tremendous resource for surmounting problems and supporting both physical and emotional health. Best of all this priceless medicine is fun, needs no prescription and is easy to use!

Laughter...

...relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

...boosts the immune system. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

...triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

...helps you relax and recharge. It reduces stress and increases energy, enabling you to stay focused and accomplish more.

...shifts perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and diffuse conflict.

...draws you closer to others, which can have a profound effect on all aspects of your mental and emotional health.

...protects the heart. Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

...burns calories. OK, so it's no replacement for going to the gym, but one study found that laughing for 10 to 15 minutes a day can burn about 40 calories—which could be enough to lose three or four pounds over the course of a year.

...lightens anger's heavy load. Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.

...may even help you to live longer. A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.

Physical health benefits of laughter:

- Boosts immunity
- Lowers stress hormones
- Decreases pain
- Relaxes your muscles
- Prevents heart disease

Mental health benefits of laughter:

- Adds joy and zest to life
- Eases anxiety and tension
- Relieves stress
- Improves mood
- Strengthens resilience

Social benefits of laughter:

- Strengthens relationships
- Attracts others to us
- Enhances teamwork
- Helps defuse conflict
- Promotes group bonding

Source: www.helpguide.org





Natural Remedies to Combat Allergies

Having just survived 4 Nor'easters, we are all looking forward to springtime! The days are longer, the trees are budding (at those that still remain standing!), flowers begin popping through the earth, and all kinds of birds return to share their beautiful songs. But for many of us, spring is the time of year for seasonal allergies. As the trees start to bloom and the pollen is released into the air, allergy sufferers begin their annual ritual of sniffing, sneezing and itchy eyes. Each year, 35 million Americans fall prey to seasonal allergic rhinitis, more commonly known as hay fever.

Allergies can really put a damper on this long awaited time of year! But there are some things in our control that can help combat some of these allergy symptoms. Many will seem like common sense, but it's a good reminder.

Shut Out Breezes

Keeping indoor air free of your allergy triggers can help ease nasal symptoms. Installing special air filters in your furnace and air conditioning systems can remove 90% to 95% of particles from your indoor air. Closing doors and windows when outdoor pollen counts are high also can help keep pollen and other outdoor allergens out of your home.

Wash Away Allergens

Each time you walk into your home, you bring small pieces of the outside world with you. After being outdoors, your clothes, shoes, hair, and skin are covered with tiny particles from everywhere you've been. Taking a shower and changing your clothes will help wash away any allergens. Leaving your shoes at the door will help keep you from tracking allergens through your home.

Wear a Mask

A mask can prevent allergens from getting into your airways when you can't avoid certain allergy triggers, like when you're mowing, raking, or vacuuming. An N95 respirator mask -- available at most drugstores and medical supply stores -- will block 95% of small particles, such as pollen and other allergens.

Eat a Healthy Diet

One study found that children who ate a diet rich in fresh vegetables, fruits, and nuts -- particularly grapes, apples, oranges, and tomatoes -- had fewer allergy symptoms. Researchers are still trying to figure out the connection between diet and nasal allergies, but eating a healthy diet is known to do the body a world of good in general. Try adding at least one fresh fruit and vegetable to every meal.

Use a Nasal Rinse

A nasal rinse cleans mucus from your nose and can help relieve nasal allergy symptoms. It also can rinse away bacteria, thin mucus, and help decrease postnasal drip. Buy a rinse kit or make one using a neti pot or a nasal bulb. Mix 1/2 teaspoon salt with a pinch of baking soda in 8 ounces of warm distilled or sterilized water. Leaning over a sink, gently flush one nostril at a time.

Drink More Fluids

If you're feeling congested or have postnasal drip from your allergies, try drinking more water, juice, or other fluids. Drinking extra liquid can help thin the mucus in your nasal passages and may give you some relief. Hot fluids -- such as teas, broth, or soup -- may be especially soothing because they add the benefits of steam.

Learn How to Clean Safely

Keeping your home clean is one of the best ways to avoid indoor allergens. But cleaning with harsh chemicals can irritate your nasal passages and aggravate your allergy symptoms. Try cleaning with ordinary household products like vinegar or baking soda. And use a vacuum cleaner that has a HEPA filter to trap allergens. If your allergies are severe, consider having someone else do the cleaning.

Try Some Steam

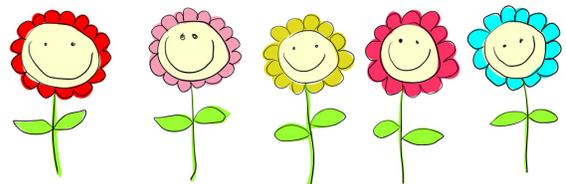
Inhaling steam is a simple way to relieve nasal congestion and can ease breathing when you have allergies. Sit over a hot bowl or sink full of water and place a towel over your head to trap the steam. Or sit in the bathroom with a hot shower running. Use steam several times a day to relieve symptoms.

Avoid Cigarette Smoke, Other Fumes

Cigarette smoke can aggravate your allergy symptoms, worsening your running, itchy, stuffy nose and watery eyes. If you smoke, quit, and ask others in your household to stop smoking, too. Try to avoid places where people smoke, opting for smoke-free restaurants, nightclubs, and hotel rooms. Avoid other fumes that can worsen symptoms, like aerosol sprays and smoke from wood-burning fireplaces.

Consider Acupuncture

Acupuncture may offer some relief to people who have allergies. It hasn't been widely studied, and the way it affects allergic rhinitis is still unclear. But a few studies have shown that acupuncture may help reduce nasal allergies. If you want to try acupuncture, talk to your doctor about whether it might help your allergies



Resources: Natural Health and [WebMD](#)



Sun Safety Time!



Given the epidemic of skin cancer in this country, sun safety should now be an important part of our lives. Some people think about sun protection only when they spend a day at the lake, beach or pool. But sun exposure adds up day after day, and it happens every time you are in the sun. **If you work outside, take note!** Sun safety should include methods of sun protection (which will help prevent skin cancers and premature aging) and methods of skin cancer detection.



There are many easy to use products that will help make your life sun safe. Sun protective clothing, including hats, sunglasses, sunscreens, umbrellas, sun shades, awnings, canopies, window film or UV film, all will help protect you from ultraviolet radiation. It is important, however, that you familiarize yourself with how to best combine sun protection methods, what the standards for sun protection apply to each product and how best to use each product. For example, sun protective clothing should offer a UPF of 30+ and therefore block 97 percent of UV. Sunscreens are best if they are broad spectrum and have a SPF 30+. You should also know that all sunscreens should be applied 20 minutes before being exposed to the sun and should be reapplied every two hours while exposed.



How to apply sunscreen

- Shake well before use to mix particles that might be clumped up in the container. Consider using the new spray-on or stick types of sunscreen.
- Be sure to apply enough sunscreen. As a rule of thumb, use an ounce (a handful) to cover your entire body.
- Use on all parts of your skin exposed to the sun, including the ears, back, neck, shoulders, and the back of the knees and legs.
- Apply thickly and thoroughly.
- Be careful when applying sunscreen around the eyes.



What to look for when you buy sunscreen

- Pick a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects against UV-A and UV-B rays and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.
- Read product labels. Look for a waterproof brand if you will be sweating or swimming. Buy a non-stinging product or one specifically formulated for your face.
- Buy a brand that does not contain para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA) if you are sensitive to that ingredient.
- Try a sunscreen with different chemicals if your skin reacts badly to the one that you are using. Not all sunscreens have the same ingredients.
- Use a water-based sunscreen if you have oily skin or are prone to acne.
- Be aware that more expensive does not mean better. Although a costly brand might feel or smell better, it is not necessarily more effective than a cheaper product.
- Be aware of the expiration date because some sunscreen ingredients might degrade over time.

Poison Ivy

Many people get a rash from poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. This rash is caused by an oil found in the plants. This oil is called urushiol (you-ROO-shee-all).

The itchy, blistering rash often does not start until 12 to 72 hours after you come into contact with the oil. The rash is not contagious and does not spread. It might seem to spread, but this is a delayed reaction.

Most people see the rash go away in a few weeks. If you have a serious reaction, you need to see a doctor right away. Swelling is a sign of a serious reaction — especially swelling that makes an eye swell shut or your face to swell. If you have trouble breathing or swallowing, get medical attention immediately.

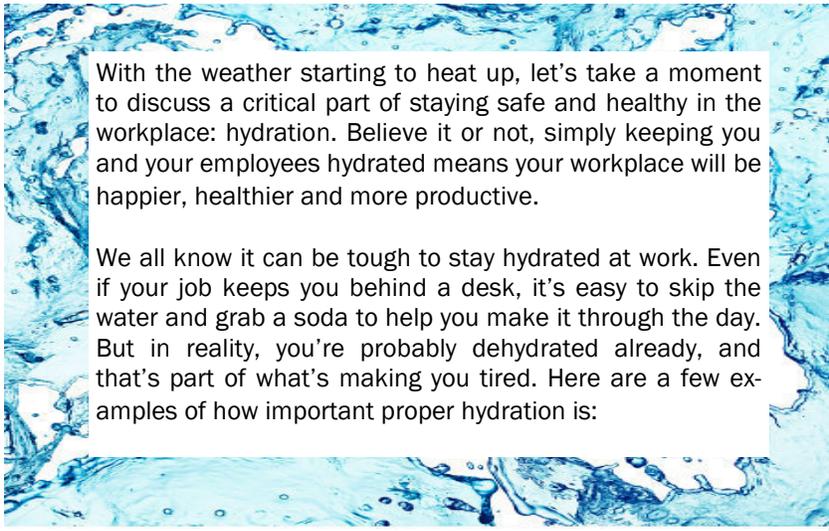
If you find yourself in an area with poison ivy, oak, or sumac, it helps to know the following:

- **All parts of these plants contain urushiol.** The leaves, the stems, and even the roots contain urushiol. Touching any part of the plant can cause an allergic reaction.
- **Touching anything that has urushiol on it can cause an allergic reaction.** You can have an allergic reaction from touching gardening tools, sporting equipment, and even a pet's fur.
- **Burning these plants releases urushiol into the air.** You can have an allergic reaction if airborne particles land on your skin.

To find out more, go to <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/itchy-skin/poison-ivy-oak-and-sumac#tips>



The Importance of Hydration



With the weather starting to heat up, let's take a moment to discuss a critical part of staying safe and healthy in the workplace: hydration. Believe it or not, simply keeping you and your employees hydrated means your workplace will be happier, healthier and more productive.

We all know it can be tough to stay hydrated at work. Even if your job keeps you behind a desk, it's easy to skip the water and grab a soda to help you make it through the day. But in reality, you're probably dehydrated already, and that's part of what's making you tired. Here are a few examples of how important proper hydration is:

Hydration Will Help Keep You Healthy!

It's no secret that not drinking enough water can have a negative impact on your health. Even setting aside long term health effects like kidney damage and seizures, dehydration can cause more immediate problems like headaches, fatigue, joint pain, inability to concentrate, nausea, vomiting, and memory loss. Obviously, suffering from any of these symptoms is going to make for an unpleasant workday.

Dehydration Can Affect Your Mood

Not drinking enough water isn't just bad for health; it can affect behavior as well. Studies have shown that even slight levels of dehydration can have a negative impact on people's mood. People who are feeling irritable are less likely to get along with co-workers or get their work done, and probably won't want to even be at work in the first place. So when employees have access to plenty of water, it can drastically improve people's moods and

Bring Back The Office Water Cooler

The office water cooler has always had a reputation for being where employees go to gossip and waste time. But truthfully, statistics show that offices with water coolers get more work done than those without one. Your employees are less likely to be dehydrated when there's cool, fresh water readily available. Also, your staff is less likely to reach for sugary drinks when they have easy access to fresh tasting water.

If your budget does not allow supplying water for your employees, please be sure to encourage drinking water and emphasize the health and safety benefits to doing so! Employees who take steps to stay hydrated will not only improve the quality of their work, but also the quality of their lives outside of work!

Source: Worker Care, leader in the field of Occupational Medicine.



The first Wednesday in April is National Walking Day. The American Heart Association sponsors this day to remind people about the health benefits of taking a walk. Wear your sneakers (or take them with you) to work, and at some point in the day, you are encouraged to take a 30-minute walk. If you have to, break up the 30 minutes into 10 minutes 3x in the day. Let this kick start incorporating more movement into every day!

Here are some great ways to make that 30-minutes more enjoyable:



- ♥ Wear comfortable clothes.
- ♥ Take a friend to pass the time.
- ♥ Make sure to stretch those muscles.
- ♥ **Drink plenty of water.**
- ♥ Move your arms, too.
- ♥ Make sure you have good posture.



Answer to joke: Because it was soda pressing.



This Creamy Chicken-Tomato Skillet Comes Together in Just 20 Minutes

You can make chicken and rice in 20 minutes. When a craving for comfort food hits and you need it in a hurry, this fast take on chicken and rice hits the spot. Stirring chopped baby spinach into warm brown rice is a smart way to get more vegetables and jazz up an otherwise plain starchy side. **Our pro tips for speedy cooking:** Cut chicken into bite-size pieces so it cooks in just a few minutes, use precooked rice and heat it in the microwave, then use the hot rice to wilt the spinach for you while you finish the chicken. Fresh thyme, chopped basil, or parsley are all good stand-ins for the rosemary.

Active time: 20 minutes

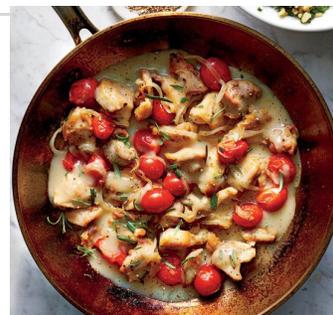
Total time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4
Serving size: about 1 1/4 cups

Ingredients

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 1 tablespoon olive oil * 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces * 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, divided * 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided * 1 cup grape tomatoes * 1/2 cup sliced white onion * 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 1 1/2 cups unsalted chicken stock * 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour * 1 (8.8-oz.) pkg. precooked microwavable whole-grain brown rice (such as Uncle Bens Ready Rice) * 3 cups fresh baby spinach, chopped * 1 teaspoon lemon zest * 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice |
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1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Sprinkle chicken with 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Add chicken to skillet; cook, without stirring, until chicken begins to brown, about 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, onion, garlic, and rosemary. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is tender and tomatoes begin to soften, about 3 minutes.
2. Whisk together stock and flour in a bowl until combined. Add to chicken mixture; stir and scrape browned bits from bottom of skillet. Bring to a boil. Cook, stirring often, until sauce thickens, 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Heat rice according to package directions. Place hot rice in a medium bowl; add spinach, lemon zest, lemon juice, remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Toss to coat (hot rice will wilt the spinach). Divide rice mixture among 4 plates; top evenly with chicken mixture.



Nutritional Information —

• Calories 296 • Fat 10g •
 Saturated Fat 2g • Unsaturated Fat 7g •
 Protein 29g • Carbohydrate
 26g • Fiber 3g • Sugars 2g
 • Added sugars 0g •
 Sodium 413mg • Calcium
 5% DV • Potassium 4% DV

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Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face. (Victor Hugo)

