April 2014

Wellness Newsletter

A Newsletter for MoDOT and MSHP

Ease the stress in your life

Stress is a part of everyone's life. Stress can be positive from events like a new job, new baby, or a new house. However, stress can be negative when our bodies are in a constant state of stress. Chronic stress can lead to a multitude of health symptoms or diseases such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, depression and anxiety. Learning to manage stress can lead to better health. **April is National Stress Awareness Month.** Take this month to learn how to reduce your stress levels.

Source: WebMD, http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/effects-of-stress-on-your-body

How to manage stress

- **Uncover the source of your stress.** It's helpful to keep a journal to identify what is causing your stress.
- **Get enough sleep.** Getting seven hours of sleep can improve your mood and help you cope better with daily stress.
- **Put a leash on your stressors.** You might not be able to eliminate those things that cause you stress. But you can figure out ways to manage them or how to react.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals.** Don't skip meals and make sure the food you eat is good for your body. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water. Limit yourself to two caffeinated drinks a day.
- **Get active.** Exercise is a proven to be a stress reliever. Try a low-impact activity, like yoga.
- **Decompress.** Learn to relax with activities like meditation, guided imagery or measured breathing.
- **Give yourself time.** Changing the way to deal with stress might involve some lifestyle changes that won't be easy. Take it one step at a time, and do the easier things first.

HIGHWAY TO BETTER HEALTH

COVENTRY Health Care

Sources: The National Headache Foundation's Headwise, http://www.headachemag.org/Articles/FitnessAndNutrition/7-Ways-to-Manage-Stress-and-Reduce-Migraine-Pain
American Headache & Migraine Association, http://www.ahmablog.com/mham.html

Stress is different for everyone

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are signs of stress and many ways it can affect your body. When you are stressed, you may feel worried, angry, irritable and unable to focus. Stress can also affect your physical health.

Physical signs of stress include:

- Headaches
- Back pain
- Problems sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss
- Tense muscles
- Frequent or more serious colds

Take small steps in coping with stress.
See information below on a Coventry tool to help you get started today.

Help kids cope with stress

Things like school, separation from parents and social pressures can be overwhelming for children and cause stress. Signs of stress can include short-term behavioral changes, such as mood swings, acting out or changes in sleep patterns. Some kids may have physical effects such as stomach aches and headaches.

You can't protect kids from stress, but you can help them develop healthy ways to cope with stress and solve everyday problems.

These tips may help:

- Boost coping skills with proper rest and good nutrition.
- Make yourself available to listen and spend time with your child(ren) each day.
- Talk with your child(ren) about what is causing stress and come up with solutions. Books can help young kids identify with characters in stressful situations and learn how they cope.
- Limit stress when possible.
- Be patient.

Source: www.kidshealth.org

Tools and resources

There's no doubt that life can be stressful. Financial pressures, work and family demands can all leave you feeling stretched too thin. **Coventry WellBeing℠** offers you help with **Relax®** stress management. *Relax* is a digital coaching program that gives you a personalized plan to help you cope with the demands of your life. The program starts with a 20 minute consultation to identify your sources of stress (e.g., finances, work, family and school). As always, your information is confidential.

Reduce your stress levels with *Relax*. To get started:

- Visit the website on your member ID card.
- Log in to or register for My Online Services.
- Select "WellBeing Solutions" under "Wellness Tools."
- Select "Go to coaching" or take the *Succeed* health risk assessment to learn what other coaching programs might help you.

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