

HEALTHBEAT

A HEALTH NEWSLETTER FOR EMPLOYEES



National Autism Awareness Month

The Mayo Clinic defines Autism as one of a group of serious developmental problems called autism spectrum disorders (ASD) that appear in early childhood, usually before age 3. Though symptoms and severity vary, all autism disorders affect a child's ability to communicate and interact with others.

Starting in the 1970's, April has been proclaimed as National Autism Awareness Month by the Autism Society of America. The Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in every 110 children in the United States has an ASD. National Autism Awareness Month is designed to raise funds for research and to show support for the autism community. Autism Awareness Month also promotes the rights of individuals with autism and encourages respect for their differences.



Facts and Statistics About

Autism from the Autism Society:

- 1 percent of the population of children in the U.S. ages 3-17 have an autism spectrum disorder.
- Prevalence is estimated at 1 in 110 births.
- 1 to 1.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder.
- Fastest-growing developmental disability; 1,148% growth rate.
- 10 - 17 % annual growth.
- \$60 billion annual cost.
- 60% of costs are in adult services.
- Cost of lifelong care can be reduced by 2/3 with early diagnosis and intervention.
- In 10 years, the annual cost will be \$200-400 billion.
- 1 percent of the adult population of the United Kingdom has an autism spectrum disorder.
- The cost of autism over the lifespan is 3.2 million dollars per person.

How Can I Show Support?

To this day, there is still no known single cause for autism, but increased awareness and funding can help families. So how can you get involved and show support? Well, there are a number of ways. You can host an event in your area or volunteer at an already existing event. Show Your Colors is a way to support autism by purchasing and wearing a bracelet with the symbol of autism, which is a puzzle piece. Reading a book about autism to your children, attending a local event sponsored by your community or supporting legislation are additional ways to show support.

Get Involved!

Visit the Autism Society of North Carolina's calendar of events and see what's going on in a community near you!

Simply visit www.autismsociety-nc.com, navigate to the "Events" tab and then select "Calendar".

Other Helpful Links

If you would like to learn more about Autism, please click on one of the links below.

Autism Society

<http://www.autism-society.org/>

The National Autism Association

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/>

Autism Speaks

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Autism Online Support Group

<http://www.mdjunction.com/autism>

TEACCH

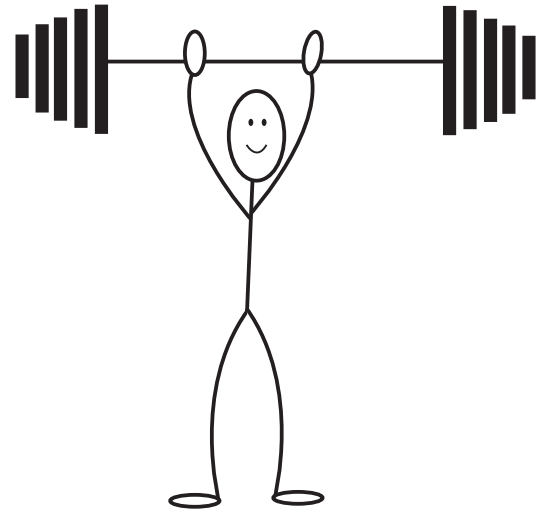
<http://www.teacch.com/>

Work-in Your Workout!

We all seem to find a million and one excuses NOT to fit in a workout into our day; I don't have the time. I don't feel well. I am too tired. I will do it tomorrow. I can't afford a personal trainer or gym membership. You get the point. But the fact of the matter is you don't have to have an expensive gym membership to workout. And believe it or not, you don't need tons of time to fit in a work out... even when you are at work!

According to the U.S. Government's Dietary Guidelines for Americans, it is recommended to:

- Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, above usual activity, at work or home on most days of the week to reduce the risk of chronic disease in adulthood.
- Engage in approximately 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity on most days of the week while not exceeding caloric intake requirements to help manage body weight and prevent gradual, unhealthy body weight gain in adulthood.
- Participate in at least 60 to 90 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity while not exceeding caloric intake requirements to sustain weight loss in adulthood.



You are probably thinking, “When am I going to fit in 30, 60 or even 90 minutes of physical activity into my day?”

One option you may want to consider is fitting in workouts while you are at work! Doing the little extras at work may not seem like a lot, but if you were to fit in four, five-minute workouts into your day (that's only 5 minutes out of every 2 hours of your work day), you would have already completed 20 minutes of your recommended daily workout.

Ok, so it may take some creativity to stay active at work, but there are plenty of opportunities if you carefully look around you.

About.com suggests the following:

- Sit on an exercise ball instead of a chair. This will strengthen your abs and back and you'll work on your posture without even trying.
- Set an alarm to go off every hour to remind you to stand up and move around. Even if you just swing your arms or take a deep breath, you'll feel more alert.
- Use the restroom on another floor and take the stairs.
- Use a pedometer and keep track of how many steps you take. Aim for 6,000 to 10,000 steps a day.
- Leave something important in your car (your lunch, your briefcase, etc.) so you have to run out to get it (and take the stairs).
- Deliver documents or messages to co-workers in person rather than by email.
- Go to the mall for lunch and park on the opposite end of the food court. Don't forget to buy something healthy. Or simply take a walk somewhere nearby your office during your lunch break.
- Get a headset for your phone so you can move around while you talk.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park further away in the parking lot.

Lose Weight, Feel Better, Look Great... for FREE!

What if someone told you that one of the best things you can do to help you lose weight, eliminate toxins from your body, protect your vital organs, and feel and look better was easily accessible, didn't require you to sweat, and was FREE? If you are anything like me, you might think that person was crazy because something like that simply doesn't exist. But it does. What is it you may ask? **It's water!**

The human body is made up of about 60% water in males and 55% in females. Every system in our bodies depends on water for things such as flushing toxins from our organs and carrying nutrients to our cells. So it's no wonder that staying properly hydrated can work wonders for our bodies. Here's just a few of the benefits of water according to WebMD:

1. **Drinking Water Helps Maintain the Balance of Body Fluids.** The functions of these bodily fluids include digestion, absorption, circulation, creation of saliva, transportation of nutrients, and maintenance of body temperature. When you're low on fluids, the brain triggers the body's thirst mechanism. And unless you are taking medications that make you thirsty, you should listen to those cues and get yourself a drink of water, juice, milk, coffee – anything but alcohol.
2. **Water Can Help Control Calories.** While water doesn't have any magical effect on weight loss, substituting it for higher calorie beverages can certainly help. Food with high water content tends to look larger, its higher volume requires more chewing, and it is absorbed more slowly by the body, which helps you feel full. Water-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, broth-based soups, oatmeal, and beans.
3. **Water Helps Energize Muscles.** Cells that don't maintain their balance of fluids and electrolytes shrivel, which can result in muscle fatigue.
4. **Water Helps Keep Skin Looking Good.** Your skin contains plenty of water, and functions as a protective barrier to prevent excess fluid loss. "Dehydration makes your skin look more dry and wrinkled, which can be improved with proper hydration," says Atlanta dermatologist Kenneth Ellner, MD. "But once you are adequately hydrated, the kidneys take over and excrete excess fluids."
5. **Water Helps Your Kidneys.** Body fluids transport waste products in and out of cells. The main toxin in the body is blood urea nitrogen, a water-soluble waste that is able to pass through the kidneys to be excreted in the urine. When you're getting enough fluids, urine flows freely, is light in color and free of odor. When your body is not getting enough fluids, urine concentration, color, and odor increases because the kidneys trap extra fluid for bodily functions.
6. **Water Helps Maintain Normal Bowel Function.** Adequate hydration keeps things flowing along your gastrointestinal tract and prevents constipation. When you don't get enough fluid, the colon pulls water from stools to maintain hydration – and the result is constipation.



Being properly hydrated has also been known to:

- Provide a natural remedy for headaches
- Increase productivity at work
- Help in preventing less cramps and sprains
- Help fight against sicknesses
- Relieve fatigue
- Increase mood
- Reduce the risk of cancer

The Harmful Effects of Dehydration:

- Tiredness
- Migraine
- Constipation
- Muscle cramps
- Irregular blood-pressure
- Kidney problems

- Dry skin
- 20% dehydrated – Risk of death

How much water does the average, healthy adult living in a temperate climate need? According to the Mayo Clinic, doctors recommend 8 or 9 cups. Without measuring out each cup of water you drink, if you drink enough fluid so that you rarely feel thirsty and produce 1.5 liters (6.3 cups) or more of colorless or slightly yellow urine a day, your fluid intake is probably adequate.

Other sources of water

Although it's a great idea to keep water within reach at all times, you don't need to rely only on

what you drink to meet your fluid needs. What you eat also provides a significant portion of your fluid needs. On average, food provides about 20 percent of total water intake. For example, many fruits and vegetables, such as watermelon and tomatoes, are 90 percent or more water by weight.

In addition, beverages such as milk and juice are composed mostly of water. Even beer, wine and caffeinated beverages — such as coffee, tea or soda — can contribute, but these should not be a major portion of your daily total fluid intake. Water is still your best bet because it's calorie-free, inexpensive and readily available.

Keep the Super Bowl, Super Light!

Ahh – Springtime is here. The birds are chirping, the flowers are blooming, and fresh breezes are blowing into open windows. But springtime also means that noses are stuffy, sneezes are running rampant, and itchy, watery eyes are everywhere! It's no doubt that springtime allergies can be miserable. But before you clear the shelves at your local pharmacy of every allergy medicine there is to offer, try a few of these tips to help keep your springtime allergies under control.

Reduce your exposure to allergy triggers

There are a number of things that you can do to reduce your exposure to the things that trigger your allergy signs and symptoms (allergens):

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days — the best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- Remove clothes you've worn outside; you may also want to shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
- Don't hang laundry outside — pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
- Wear a dust mask if you do outside chores.

Take extra steps when pollen counts are high

Seasonal allergy signs and symptoms can flare up when there's a lot of pollen in the air. These steps can help you reduce your exposure:

- Check your local TV or radio station, your local newspaper, or the Internet for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- If high pollen counts are forecasted, start taking allergy medications before your symptoms start.
- Close doors and windows at night or any other time when pollen counts are high.
- Avoid outdoor activity in the early morning when pollen counts are highest.

Keep indoor air clean

There's no miracle product that can eliminate all allergens from the air in your home, but these suggestions may help:

- Use the air conditioning in your house and car.
- If you have forced air heating or air conditioning in your house, use high-efficiency filters and follow regular maintenance schedules.
- Keep indoor air dry with a dehumidifier.
- Use a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter in your bedroom.
- Clean floors often with a vacuum cleaner that has a HEPA filter.

Try an over-the-counter remedy

Several types of nonprescription medications can help ease allergy symptoms. They include:

- Oral antihistamines. Antihistamines can help relieve sneezing, itching, runny nose and watery eyes. Examples of oral antihistamines include loratadine (Claritin, others) and cetirizine (Zyrtec, others). Older antihistamines such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl, others) and chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton, others) are also effective, but they can make you drowsy.
- Decongestants. Oral decongestants such as pseudoephedrine (Sudafed, others) can provide temporary relief from nasal stuffiness. Decongestants also come in nasal sprays such as oxymetazoline (Afrin, others) and phenylephrine (Vicks Sinex, others). Only use nasal decongestants for short-term relief. Long-term use of decongestant nasal sprays can actually worsen symptoms (rebound congestion).
- Cromolyn spray. Cromolyn (Nasalcrom) can ease allergy symptoms — but it can take up to a week of several sprays a day to start working.
- Combination medications. A number of allergy medications combine an antihistamine with a decongestant. Examples include the oral medication Actifed, which combines the antihistamine chlorpheniramine with the decongestant phenylephrine; and the nasal spray Claritin-D, which combines the antihistamine loratadine and the decongestant pseudoephedrine.

Information Source: MayoClinic.com