

Our Education Mission

Education & Academic Affairs at HSS is committed to being the source for outstanding initiatives in education, training, research and information for local, national and international communities to prevent and treat musculoskeletal conditions.

Health & Wellness Issue

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150
YEARS

Programs Promoting
Musculoskeletal Health

Here's to Wellness!

Well-ness: The state or condition of being in good physical and mental health.

To be well requires nurturing not just your body, but also your mind and your spirit as well. That means eating a healthy diet. Getting enough exercise. Learning to manage stress. Creating mind-body balance. Keeping your brain healthy and active. And forging social connections.

With the pleasant summer months upon us, it's easier to get out and make positive changes to promote wellness. What does wellness mean for you, and how can you achieve it? Let the articles in this issue of HealthConnection lead the way!

Finding Balance in Mind and Body

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Many people consider the concept of achieving a balanced life to mean having sufficient time and finances to devote to family, work, spiritual, and community activities, while still being able to enjoy a favorite recreational activity and plan for retirement. Yet this goal sounds impossible to achieve in our society, which often values multitasking and applauds over-commitment in all aspects of our stress-filled lives.

Recently, a growing interest in the practice of meditation as a means of achieving life balance has been developing in the scientific literature. While some are looking for non-pharmacologic means of dealing with chronic health conditions, others are seeking to improve their quality of life amid the stresses and pressures of daily life by developing a meditation practice. Concepts associated with meditation, such as “mindfulness, compassion, and equanimity,” are being explored not only as relaxation strategies, but as vital components of integrated wellness.

What does it mean to be “mindful”? Mindfulness is the basic act of being attentive, aware and present. Activities that enable you to be mindful — such as meditation, yoga, t'ai chi and guided imagery — are excellent ways to contribute to your overall feeling of wellness.

Mindfulness activities help re-establish balance by promoting the “relaxation response.” They tend to distract your focus from things that may be causing you stress. These activities help you to slow down and “re-center” yourself, raising levels of the calming hor-

“You must learn to be still in the midst of activity and to be vibrantly alive in repose.”

—Indira Gandhi



more oxytocin and reducing levels of the stress hormone cortisol to promote relaxation.

While it's true that such mindfulness activities can help you feel relaxed, science shows that the health *continued on page 2*

benefits go even deeper. A study published in June 2012 in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* compared two groups: one that practiced yogic meditation, and another that did not. Both groups had similar levels of anxiety going into the study. At the conclusion of the program, however, those who practiced meditation reported better quality of life and a significant reduction in anxiety and blood pressure, while these improvements were not observed in the control group.

You can even derive benefits from a brief guided meditation in your workplace. A study published in January 2012 in the journal *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* showed that just 15 minutes of guided meditation done in an office chair decreased heart rate, breathing rate and blood pressure. Other researchers have found that students who engaged in a brief meditation before taking an exam experienced less test anxiety and were better able to focus.

Other tools to enhance mindfulness include adopting a personal “mantra”: positive self-talk to get through challenging situations. Such mantras can avoid a downward spiral of negativity that may prevent you from moving forward and accomplishing what you need or want to do. (See below for examples of such positive affirmations.)

Studies at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Clinic of Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School have also shown that mindfulness exercises can help people prepare for and recover from surgery and to cope with chronic medical conditions. For example, research has demonstrated that guided imagery can be beneficial for increasing resiliency following joint replacement surgery and for easing the discomfort associated with rheumatoid arthritis.

There are many methods of achieving mindfulness. Here are three ways to practice mindfulness to achieve a feeling of wellness:



Take a Mindfulness Journey

Take a few moments and picture yourself in your mind's eye on the path in this photo, and allow yourself to follow the trail through the forest. You may be amazed at the results of your journey.

- 1. Make positive affirmations.** Create positive self affirmations (mantras) that work for you and your goals. You might say, “I am healed. I am strong. I am healthy.” Or choose whatever statements work for you — tools you can employ when negative self-talk begins to creep in and threatens your tranquility.
- 2. Use guided imagery.** See yourself where you want to be. If you're having joint replacement surgery or another procedure, visualize the way you see yourself after the operation is over and you are healed. Are you walking along a beach? Getting dressed up to go out to a nice restaurant with friends? Strolling the paths of Central Park? Investigators at the Cleveland Clinic have found that people who began such visualization before the surgery and who maintained it as they recovered were better able to tolerate rehabilitation.
- 3. Work on being present through meditation, yoga, or a sport you love.** Do you find yourself dwelling on the past or worrying about the future? Participate in activities that stimulate your senses. Be fully aware of where you are now and what is going on around you. What do you hear and smell? How does the air feel? How does your body feel? You can even say your mantra in your head as you breathe in and out during the activity.

Find the mindfulness activities that work best for you. Doing so can promote a feeling of calm and well-being that is essential to achieving balance and wellness. Recognize the opportunities that are available in your everyday life to practice awareness, and allow your mind to practice relaxation imagery, even in the midst of a very busy day. So lead with your mind, and your body will follow. ■

Stress: How to Name It, Claim It, and Control It

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What is your typical day like? If you're like many people, you may put in more than an eight-hour workday. You might start checking e-mails before you even leave home in the morning and continue monitoring them until bedtime. You may have to juggle personal and professional activities while caregiving for a loved one. On many days, making time to prepare a home-cooked meal or squeeze in a visit to the gym may not be in the cards.

If you feel like you're constantly striving to catch up with what you need to do each day, you're not alone. Balancing personal and professional obligations is not always easy and they can quickly accumulate to cause stress in our lives. While some things will always be out of our control, others can be managed. The trick is to make the distinction and focus your energy where it is most effective.

Are You Stressed?

Some people claim they thrive on stress, that they don't get anything accomplished unless they have a deadline breathing down their necks. And while short-term stress may help you achieve a goal or get out of a dan-

gerous predicament (the "fight or flight" response), chronic stress has its drawbacks. The same nerve chemicals that can save your life in a perilous situation can, when continually released over a long period of time, lower your immunity and affect functions such as digestion.

The first step to managing stress is to recognize if you have it. How do you know the difference between being "busy" and feeling "stressed"? If you're stressed, you may have a change in your appetite or sleep habits, feel tense and irritable or exhibit repetitive behaviors such as nail biting or tooth grinding. You may have headaches, back pain and stomach problems. Some people have trouble making decisions, find they cry more easily or seek solace in alcohol or drugs.

Another way to learn if you are feeling stressed is to evaluate yourself through the Perceived Stress Scale. You can take an online version located at: www.roadtowellbeing.ca/questionnaires/perceived-stress.html.

Identifying Your Triggers

If you are under stress, the next step in learning to manage it is to find out where it's coming from. Internal causes of stress may include having a pessimistic outlook, unrealistic expectations and an inability to accept change.

External causes may include work, family issues, health problems or relationships. Once you've identified what is causing stress in your life, you can begin taking steps to manage it.

Seven Stress Solutions

Completely avoiding any stress in your life is impossible, but you can learn to ease its effects. Here are some ideas:

- 1. Plan ahead.** If you find you're always running late to work or appointments, build in a little extra time to get there. Then if you get delayed, you won't feel as stressed.
- 2. Choose your battles.** If you're getting ready for a meeting and your phone rings five minutes before you're about to leave, think about whether it can go to voicemail. If it's unlikely to be something you can address in those five minutes, it can wait until later, when you have more time.
- 3. Periodically disconnect.** We live in a world where we are electronically connected 24/7. If work e-mails at home are a source of stress, speak with your employer about his or her expectations. Are you required to answer e-mails outside of business hours, or can your response wait until the next workday? Also speak with your supervisor about not having to check e-mails while you are on vacation. (More people these days are choosing to travel "unplugged.")
- 4. Set boundaries.** Just as you can't do everything at once, you can't be everything to all people. Sometimes you have to say "no" to others asking for your help if giving that assistance continues to cause stress for you.
- 5. Seek social support.** You don't have to shoulder the world. Enlist the support of family and friends who are able to

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How to Keep Moving at Every Level of Fitness

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150 minutes. That's how much moderate aerobic activity is recommended each week for adults, according to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (CDC). The guidelines also recommend muscle-strengthening exercises on two days of each week. Yet those numbers can seem daunting, and even defeating, to those whose physical activity has been limited to grocery shopping or walking to the office water cooler.

Most of us know that physical activity is an important component of wellness. Regular activity is good for your heart, can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight and reduces your risk of diseases such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and stroke. Incorporating physical activity into your life does not have to be exhausting, however. Beginners can start by setting manageable goals. Moderately fit exercisers can learn how to create a balanced fitness program. And there is always something that advanced athletes can do to step up their exercise routines and enhance their performance.

For Beginners

Those just embarking on an exercise program should start slow, with a primary goal of making physical activity a routine part of their lives. Start by moving a bit more each day, such as:

- Getting off the bus or subway a few stops earlier and walking the rest of the way
- Parking your car farther from a store so you have to walk farther to get there
- Taking stairs instead of the elevator, at

least part of the way

- Getting up and down from your chair ten times in a row
- Walking your dog farther than you usually do

Consider wearing a pedometer to measure your steps each day (some of which are available as free Smartphone apps), with the goal of gradually increasing the number. Now is not the time to buy the latest gadget or piece of exercise equipment; starting simple is best. You can join a gym or just choose an activity that you enjoy and gets you moving. Examples include dancing, hiking, bicycling or yoga. Perhaps share an activity with a friend; it can be fun to socialize and can be highly motivating to set goals with someone else.

The goal at this early stage is just to get moving. Small victories can be inspiring; consider treating yourself to some new running shoes or an exercise watch as a reward for your efforts.

Finally, when you are just starting out on an exercise program, feel free to experiment with different types of activity. The beginner phase

should be a time to discover your “fitness personality.” Do you like to exercise alone or with a group? Indoors or out? When exercise is fun, it's easier to make it an enjoyable part of your life. Once you've incorporated regular movement into your day, you can then move on to the next phase to determine if your exercise routine is offering a balanced fitness program.

Moving Up to Moderate

Once you've established a pattern of regular physical activity in which you are exercising at least three or four days each week, you are considered a moderate exerciser. Congratulations! Now's the time to incorporate other types of activity and create a balanced exercise routine. It's important to have a good mix of aerobic, stretching and strengthening exercises to provide balance and reduce your risk of injury.

How do you know what to do next? Consider consulting with a personal trainer to have a fitness assessment. Such an assessment is available at many gyms, as well as Hospital for Special Surgery. You can also take the President's Challenge Adult Fitness Test online (www.adultfitnessstest.org) and receive a personalized evaluation after submitting your test results. These assessments evaluate your aerobic fitness, muscular *continued on page 9*

Maintaining Fitness at Every Level — A Self Guide

Beginner

Goal: Make fitness a part of my life

- ▶ Move more each day
- ▶ Take the stairs
- ▶ Get up and down from a chair
- ▶ Measure my steps with a pedometer
- ▶ Get an exercise buddy

Moderate Exerciser

Goal: Create a balanced exercise routine with aerobic, stretching and strengthening activities

- ▶ Have a fitness assessment
- ▶ Consult a personal trainer
- ▶ Add stretching and strengthening exercises done with a class or on my own
- ▶ Increase intensity and/or duration of aerobic activity

Advanced Athlete

Goal: Vary my routine to maintain progress and reduce the risk of overuse injuries

- ▶ Get exercise coaching privately or through a club
- ▶ Try a new sport or activity
- ▶ Vary my range of motion
- ▶ Sign up for a race or fundraiser
- ▶ Mentor a new exerciser

When Falling Down Gets You Down... and How to Get Up Again

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In March 1998, just a month after celebrating a gold medal win at the Olympics in Nagano, Japan, skier Picabo Street took a fateful spill at the World Cup, shattering her leg in multiple places. While a long physical recovery was expected to follow, what she didn't anticipate was the weighty depression that ensued. She shuttered herself from her family, friends and the world, hiding away in a dark bedroom of her parents' home for weeks. It would be 20 months of surgeries and rehabilitation before she was able to hit the slopes again to get back to what she loved.*

You don't have to be an Olympian to experience depression after an injury. Injury and illness can prohibit you from doing the things you love, inhibit your ability to be independent, and cause pain that can put a crimp in anyone's mood. For some, like Picabo Street, the depression can be debilitating, causing withdrawal from our usual activities and the people in our lives.

The link between injury and depression goes even further, with a biological basis. The areas of the brain related to depression are the same areas involved in the perception of pain (explaining why there are medications available that treat both). In addition, when you exercise, your body releases natural painkillers called endorphins. So when you are sidelined by an injury, you aren't able to experience the "exercise high" created by those vital proteins.

The link between injury, pain and depression has been confirmed in clinical studies. One survey of people with chronic low back pain found that over three-quarters of them reported feeling depressed, with the severity of their depression increasing with the intensity of their pain and the degree to which it disabled them. There may also be a fear of re-injury during recovery: One study showed that two-thirds of elderly patients recovering from a hip fracture reported a fear of falling and associated anxiety.

Depression has also been found to impair wound healing. Studies examining the fluid in surgical incisions of people with and without depression showed that fluid secretions in the wounds of people feeling stressed or de-

pressed contained higher levels of inflammatory proteins called cytokines. Cortisol, a hormone which is produced in high levels during chronic stress, has also been associated with delayed wound healing.

The association between depression and injury goes both ways. People who are depressed are at greater risk for getting injured, possibly because they are feeling distracted

and not paying as much attention to what they are doing. One study of people living in rural Iowa found that people with depression had a 41 percent increase in the risk for injury, even after taking into account other factors such as use of antidepressants, gender, prior injury, income and sleepiness. The researchers recommended that healthcare providers should talk about safety with patients who are experiencing depression.

Depression can hurt, and injury can cause depression. But there are steps you can take to reduce its effect on your life and well-being. ■

**Reference: "Athletes' Injuries Go Beyond the Physical." New York Times, September 26, 2000. Also Picabo: Nothing to Hide, the autobiography of Picabo Street (2002).*

What can you do to lift your mood while recovering from injury or reduce your risk of injury if you are feeling depressed?

- **Focus on what you can do, rather than on what you can't.** You may not be able to run or do aerobics, but maybe you can ride a stationary bicycle or take a class in t'ai chi or yoga. If you're recovering from an injury, speak with your doctor about acceptable levels of activity.
 - **Reach out to your social support network.** Don't be afraid to lean on friends, family members and coworkers for assistance as you recover. (See the article about social connectedness on page 10.)
 - **Engage in activities that distract you from focusing on pain.** Research has shown that your level of pain perception is related to how much you focus on it. Read a thrilling novel, watch a movie, listen to classical music, or go out with friends to shift your focus to something you enjoy.
 - **If you're feeling depressed, take a walk.** People who are feeling de-
- pressed may isolate themselves and be reluctant to exercise. Don't set the bar too high for yourself: You don't have to do a three-mile run, but a walk around the block can lift your spirits by releasing mood-boosting endorphins. Some people enjoy the refreshing feeling of water during pool exercises. As you begin to feel better, you may want to do even more.
- **Consider counseling.** You may find benefit in opening up to a therapist about your feelings, who can provide you with tools to cope with them. Some patients may benefit from medication to support them through this process.
 - **Watch what you're eating.** A change in diet can make a difference in how you feel. Drink lots of water (dehydration can cause irritability), cut down on sugars and processed foods, and eat plenty of fruits and green leafy vegetables. (See the nutrition article on page 6.)

Making Every Bite Count

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“Eat your vegetables.” Most of us have heard this since a young age. And while it is important to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables each day, there are other dietary recommendations that are just as important for achieving and maintaining wellness.

We've boiled them down (no pun intended) to:

- **Quality: What foods you choose to eat**
- **Quantity: How much you eat**
- **Timing: How often you eat**

With this framework in mind, you can make healthy eating an easier part of your life and achieve a stronger feeling of wellness.

Quality: Choose Wisely

The healthiest foods include those that are high in nutrients and are not highly processed. These foods give you the most bang for your buck, providing your body with the nutrients it needs for health and well-being as well as fuel to function properly, while helping you to feel satisfied. Because nutrient-rich foods give your body what it needs, you're less likely to feel hungry again after just a short amount of time. Lower-quality foods, such as cookies and potato chips — which tend to be highly processed and

low in nutrients — are less likely to make you feel satisfied. Instead, they leave you hungry for something else, and possibly drive you to crave other unhealthy snacks.

To ensure you get the nutrients your body needs, include fruits and vegetables of various colors, low-fat proteins (such as poultry, fish or low-fat dairy products), and whole grains. Some fat is necessary for hormonal balance, brain function and the integrity of your cells' membranes (including your skin). Choose fats wisely by consuming reasonable amounts from healthy sources such as nuts, salmon, olives, hummus or avocados.

Quantity: Watch Your Portion Sizes

How much do you need to eat? That amount varies from person to person depending on height, weight, gender and level of physical activity. When you eat more calories than you burn, you gain weight. Paying attention to appropriate portion sizes is very important for maintaining and managing a healthy weight. (See the list at right for recommended portion sizes and the chart for ideas regarding healthy choices.)

How much you can eat also depends on your age: As you get older, the percentage of your body that is muscle begins to decline and your body fat content may rise, making it harder to maintain or lose weight. Muscle is more metabolically active than fat, meaning that it burns more calories than fat when the body is at rest. So having more muscle raises

your rate of metabolism. As you get older and have less muscle mass, you may find you need to eat less food and to exercise more to avoid gaining weight. In fact, not gaining weight in older age is as much of an accomplishment as losing weight!

The government has created Choose My Plate to recommend how much you may eat from each food group each day (www.choosemyplate.gov). The following guidelines can help you estimate standard portion sizes:



• **1 cup of fruits or vegetables = the size of a woman's fist**



• **1/2 cup of yogurt, ice cream, or grains = the size of a tennis ball**



• **1/4 cup of raisins = one large egg**



• **3 ounces of protein = the palm of your hand or a deck of cards**



• **1 ounce of nuts or raisins fits in the palm of your hand**



• **1 ounce of cheese = the size of your thumb**



• **1 tablespoon of peanut butter = the size of a 9-volt (rectangular) battery**



• **1 teaspoon of sugar or oil = the tip of your thumb**

Creamy Berry Smoothie

Try this recipe for a sweet and healthy smoothie to get you out the door in the morning. The yogurt adds protein, calcium and a creamy texture, while the berries add color and are chock full of vitamin C.

1 cup strawberries, raspberries or blueberries (frozen berries work as well as fresh and are easier to keep on hand)

1/2 cup of plain or nonfat vanilla yogurt

A splash of orange or cranberry juice or a squeeze of lemon or lime juice (adds a tangy flavor)

1 cup of ice (add more or less for your desired texture)

Mix all ingredients in a blender until smooth and drink up!

Food and Fitness Facts

Although you do not need to directly go “walk off” a meal after you eat, there does need to be an energy balance between the food you consume and the amount of energy you need to get through each day. Below are some examples of how much more work it would take to burn off the extra calories consumed in the higher-calorie foods listed in the first column.

Higher-calorie food	Amount of walking to burn the calories	Lower-calorie food	Amount of walking to burn the calories	Amount of walking needed to burn extra calories
Bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich (510 cal)	116 mins	Wheat English muffin with 1 scrambled egg and 1 slice cheese (310 cal)	50 mins	66 mins
French fries – 25 items (709 cal)	152 mins	Baked potato (173 cal)	37 mins	115 mins
Fried chicken – 3 oz (221 cal)	47 mins	Grilled chicken – 3 oz (140 cal)	30 mins	17 mins
Double cheeseburger (620 cal)	133 mins	Regular cheeseburger (305 cal)	65 mins	68 mins
Vanilla ice cream – 1 scoop (280 cal)	60 mins	Lowfat frozen yogurt, vanilla (110 cal)	24 mins	36 mins

Sources: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute; Nutritionist Pro™ Diet Analysis software

Note: All figures are approximate. Physical activity calculations are based on a 154-pound person walking 3.5 miles per hour.

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The amount of food typically served in restaurants and in packaged foods has grown enormously. So if you eat out a lot or often buy packaged foods, it can be easy to pile on extra calories, and therefore extra pounds. If you're in a restaurant facing a huge plate of food, consider sharing it, or eat a healthy portion and take the rest home.

Better yet, try to eat more meals at home. When you prepare meals yourself, they usually contain less fat and salt than those made commercially, and you're more likely to eat smaller portion sizes than you would in a restaurant.

Timing: Eat More Often

Use smart snacks to bridge the hunger gap instead of going for six to eight hours straight without eating, and then consuming a huge meal. You'll have more consistent energy. Timing your snacks around exercise can also be helpful; a snack can help give you the energy you need to work harder, without weighing you down. Examples of smart snacks include a cup of yogurt with a handful of almonds, an apple and an ounce of low-fat cheese, or a banana with a tablespoon of peanut butter.

Eating healthy doesn't have to be a challenge. All it takes is a little advance planning! ■



Brain Boosting 101: Well Body, Well Mind

Mark Herceg, PhD | Director of Neuropsychology | Burke Rehabilitation Hospital

You get up to go to another room, and you know there was something you were about to do, but you've forgotten. You can take a tip from comedian Bill Cosby, who recommends that as soon as you go back to the other room and sit down, you'll say, "Oh yeah, NOW I remember!"

That's one way. You can use many other techniques to keep your mind sharp. Small lapses in memory and other cognitive functions happen to all of us, at all ages, but can increase in frequency as we get older. Fortunately, there are simple steps you can take to keep your brain in tip-top shape.

Pay Attention

To take in knowledge, our brains have to be continuously engaged. So be attentive to your surroundings. Be present in each moment. Know what day of the week it is, and what is going on for you that day. It's important to keep the hippocampus (your brain's memory center) active. This ability lessens over time if you don't put it to good use. In fact, a Swedish study which compared people who used GPS only with those who read maps found that the hippocampus shrank over time in those who used GPS alone. So find ways to exercise your brain. (See sidebar for ideas.)

Get Moving

One of the best ways to boost your brain power is to enhance the flow of oxygen-rich and nutrient-rich blood to brain tissue. Regular physical activity increases blood flow to the brain, spurs the development of nerve cells (including those in the hippocampus), and fosters nerve cell connections. Increasing and maintaining such connections can also improve your ability to handle stress.

The best physical exercise for your brain is one which raises your heart rate. A brisk walk is a great way to start, beginning with 20 to 30 minutes a day and working up from there. Try to walk at least three days a week. If the weather keeps you inside, consider using a treadmill or exercise bike, or try mall walking. (See the article about fitness on page 4 to learn how to increase your exercise level.)

Maintain Outside Interests

Taking up a new hobby or other activity,

or rekindling your interest in an old one, is beneficial for brain health. A study published in 2003 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that seniors who read, played board games or musical instruments or danced had a lower risk of dementia than those who did not participate in such leisure activities. When you are engaged these kinds of activities, your attention to the activity increases. And because you are doing something

The best physical exercise for your brain is one which raises your heart rate.

which you enjoy (as opposed to an obligation), you are more likely to be present and focused.

Our interest in hobbies also stimulates the hypothalamus, a part of the brain that influences many bodily functions, one of which is mood. Partaking in hobbies is an excellent way to relieve stress. If done with friends or through a club, they also enhance *continued on page 9*

Stimulate Your Brain by:

- **Writing it down.** Your brain can only keep track of so much, so writing things down can help. Mapping out your day ahead of time and keeping a weekly agenda can help you organize your thoughts and activities.
- **Getting some culture.** Consider viewing an art exhibit you haven't seen before, taking in the different colors, textures and moods created by the painting or sculpture. Or attend a live concert. Music stimulates brain pathways in special ways.
- **Doing a daily puzzle.** Crossword puzzles and number games, like Sudoku, can give your brain a daily workout
- **Starting a book club.** Reading is an excellent way to expand your vocabulary and discussing books with your peers provides the added benefit of social interaction.





Brain Boosting, continued from page 8

social connectedness, which has its own benefits for wellness. (See the article on social connectedness on page 10.)

Sleep Well

Many of us are so busy accomplishing our daily tasks that we don't get good sleep. But your brain needs sleep to restore itself and maintain the proper balance of nerve chemicals. The key is not the quantity, but the quality. During restless sleep — such as when you can't sleep because something is troubling you — your brain remains active. Find ways to put the stresses of the day behind you so you can get high-quality, restorative sleep each night, such as reading before bed or meditating.

Watch What You Eat

Studies have found that a high-cholesterol

diet raises the risk of dementia. Too much alcohol can also impair brain health, and high blood sugar increases the risk of stroke. A healthy diet high in B vitamins and folic acid can reduce your risk of dementia by lowering levels of an amino acid called homocysteine. Follow a diet high in whole grains, leafy greens, avocados, and other green fruits and vegetables. (See the article on page 6 to learn how good nutrition can enhance wellness.)

Use a Tool

There are Smartphone games designed to keep the brain sharp and applications to help us track reminders. These tools may not necessarily restore brain function already lost, but may help you maintain your current level of brain fitness.

With a little daily effort, you can support a well body by developing a well mind. ■

Keep Moving, continued from page 4

strength and endurance, flexibility and body composition. Based on the results, you can chart your course for better physical fitness, adding additional exercises and ramping up frequency and intensity as recommended.

If you consult a personal trainer, make sure he or she is certified by the American College of Sports Medicine or the National Strength and Conditioning Association. Specialists with these certifications have at least a bachelor's degree and hours of on-the-job experience. Their fitness advice is well-researched and based on scientific evidence. Avoid anyone who tries to sell you a specific product as part of their fitness recommendations.

Advanced Athletes:

Taking It to the Next Level

Exercisers who are working out on a regular basis with aerobic, stretching and strengthening activities may hit a plateau. The body has a way of adapting to recurrent activity and you might stop seeing progress, even though you are working out at a high level. Steps you can take to elevate your response to exercise include:

- Enlisting the guidance of a coach or

personal trainer

- Joining a local club, such as a running club, where coaching and guidance are offered
- Trying a new sport, such as bicycling or swimming instead of or in addition to running for aerobic activity
- Using free weights instead of pulley weights; reducing the repetition number but increasing the weight lifted; or doing different weightlifting exercises that change the plane of motion
- Learning yoga or Pilates to incorporate new ways of stretching into your exercise regimen
- Setting a goal to complete an event such as a half-marathon or bike-a-thon, or planning a physically active vacation that requires a certain level of training
- Becoming a mentor to someone who is less active than you, which can reignite your passion for a sport or activity

A change to your routine will not only add excitement and interest in your activity program, but also reduce your risk of overuse injuries. Setting goals, varying your activities and keeping moving are great ways to stay in shape and maintain wellness at any age! ■

Stress, continued from page 3

help you. Pets can also be a wonderful source of comfort and make you feel calmer. (See the article about social connectedness on page 10.)

- 6. Take care of YOU:** Make sure you eat a healthy diet, exercise and get enough restful sleep. Take time to decompress with a hobby, yoga or t'ai chi class, meditation or something else that brings you joy. Practice deep breathing or imagine yourself somewhere relaxing when you are feeling stressed. You can't help others if you are feeling burned out yourself.

- 7. Prioritize:** You can't do everything at once, and some things you can't control at all. Look at the issues causing you stress and divide them into two columns: those you can't control and those that you can. Channeling your energy into those under your control will be more satisfying and rewarding than trying to control everything.

Recognizing stress, identifying its causes and making changes in your life to reduce its triggers are all vital to good health and wellness. ■

Reaching Out: Making Connections for Wellness

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Looking a cashier in the eye as he gives you change. Guiding a tourist to her destination. Helping someone pick up something that they dropped on the street. What do all of these activities have in common?

They are simple ways to forge connections with the people around you. Such social connectedness can be an important contributor to your overall feeling of wellness. Research has shown that these connections can not only make people feel better emotionally, but may help reduce blood pressure and enhance the immune response. Biologically, social networks may also have a buffering effect on stress. Studies have shown that people who have social connections in their lives are less likely to be isolated, more able to handle stress, and more likely to be able to get to their healthcare providers for preventive care and medical treatments. Conversely, people without these connections may report more depression, have poorer eating and sleeping habits, and exercise less (Institute of Medicine, 2001).

Just having people around you does not mean you are socially connected. Someone can be surrounded by people, yet not feel a strong connection with them and still feel lonely. Similarly, some people enjoy time spent alone without feeling lonely. Being lonely is not the same as being alone.

Here are some ways you can begin forging strong social connections in your life:

- **Join a club or take a class.** You might choose one focused on a hobby, sport or craft that you like. You'll automatically have something in common with the other people there by virtue of your shared interest.
- **Join a house of worship.** Sharing your spirituality with others can be very unifying. Houses of worship also often have strong ties to their communities, so you may meet other people in your community through the people you worship with.
- **Volunteer.** You can read to the blind, help

out in a hospital or your child's school, or do crafts with seniors at a local nursing home or retirement community. In addition to meeting new people, the feeling of helping others selflessly can boost

your confidence and put you in a great mood — and may help you temporarily forget about your own worries!

- **Find old friends on a social media site.** Tools such as Facebook can be a great way to reconnect with friends from high school, college or your old neighborhood. Even if you don't see them very often, finding out you still have a lot in

Get Connected

Here are some ways you can change old habits and start forging social connections that make you — and those around you — feel better.

If you usually:

Look down while thanking a cashier as you put your change away.

Push your way past tourists visiting your town.

Walk past the apartment door or drive past the house of an elderly neighbor.

Retreat to your hotel room each evening while traveling on business.

Tell someone you run into, "We should have lunch." And then wait for the other person to make plans.

Try this instead:

Look her in the eye and say "thank you" as she puts the change in your hand. Then say something like "enjoy your day" or "thanks for your help" before you leave.

When you see a visitor looking at a map, stop and ask, "Do you need help getting somewhere?"

Slip a note under his or her door or in the mailbox offering to help with errands. If you have their phone number, give a ring from time to time before going to the supermarket to see if they need anything.

Contact a friend or relative in the city you are visiting and make plans for dinner. If you're attending a conference, asking the person sitting next to you "where are you from?" is an easy way to start a conversation before a presentation begins.

Say, "I'd love to get together for lunch. Can we exchange phone numbers so we can set a date?" Follow up by making specific plans.

Programs and Resources

Hospital for Special Surgery offers a variety of wellness exercise classes designed to help you gain endurance, strength and flexibility. Meditation, relaxation and general wellness programs are also offered.

Better Balance for Older Adults: Unique exercises selected for individuals who would like to increase their balance control and decrease the risk of falls.

Gentle Yoga: The slow, controlled physical movement of yoga can provide pain relief, relax stiff muscles, ease sore joints and help build strength.

Pilates: A series of specific movements designed to strengthen the powerhouse muscles of the abdomen, back and waist.

Yogalates: A popular form of exercise that blends the best of yoga and Pilates.

T'ai Chi Chih®: Simple, rhythmic movements that provide benefits such as improved balance, strength, flexibility and maintenance of bone mass.

Dance for Fitness and Fun: Studies have shown that dance maintains cardiovascular fitness, enhances emotional well-being, strengthens weight-bearing bones and slows loss of bone mass.

Restorative Yoga and Deep Relaxation: The gentle supported poses tailored to each individual's condition aid in deep relaxation and rejuvenation.

Increase Your Brain Power: Education and techniques to strengthen age-related cognitive function and the health of the brain.

For more information on the schedule, location and cost of these classes, visit www.hss.edu/pped or call 212.774.2793.

Integrative Care Center (ICC): The ICC, located in mid-Manhattan and affiliated with Hospital for Special Surgery, offers movement and group exercise classes such as OsteoFitness, Back to Basics, therapeutic yoga, Pilates and T'ai Chi Chih®. Please visit www.hss.edu/icc for more information on Summer/Fall 2013 class offerings or call 212.224.7900.

Other resources:

Arthritis Foundation: www.arthritis.org

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases:
www.niams.nih.gov

Choose My Plate: www.Choosemyplate.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/index.html

Online Webinars:

Check out our free HSS webinars at www.hss.edu/pped-webinars. All webinars can also be accessed as podcasts at www.hss.edu/podcasts. Topics include:

- Runner's Health and Marathon Training
- Lupus Care: The Past, the Present and the Future
- Advances in Lupus Research: Spotlight on Treatment
- Osteoarthritis: Today's Options for Osteoarthritis Management

New issue of HealthConnection FastFacts available online!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States. Eating a healthy diet and incorporating exercise into your day are two important things you can do to maintain a healthy heart. The latest edition of this online health education newsletter, available at www.hss.edu/public-patient-education, has a listing of steps to a healthy heart.



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common years later can be very nurturing. Don't be intimidated by those who use Facebook to brag and resist the urge to compare yourself with others.

- **Choose friends who are good for you.** The best ones feel happy for you when you are happy and support you when you're feeling down.
- **Don't wait for others to contact you — reach out to them.** Call a friend or family member every week or two to meet for a meal, go to a movie or take a walk. If someone keeps turning you down, don't take it personally; sometimes people have issues in their own lives that you may not be aware of.

It can be hard to forge new social connections, and to re-establish old ones. Some people benefit from speaking with a therapist to find out what is getting in the way of forming new relationships. A therapist can provide you with tools to help you create new social bonds.

Whether you live in a big city, surrounded by millions of people, or you live in a small town, it can be challenging to make new friends. People ultimately want other people to listen to them; if you can be that person who listens, it will make you both feel better. With just a little effort, you can widen your social circle and expand your network of friends. The opportunities are yours for the taking! ■

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**Community Service Plan 2010-12: Advancing the Prevention
Agenda for Public Health**

The 2010-12 Community Service Plan provides a concise overview of Hospital for Special Surgery's initiatives that help improve the health, mobility, and quality of life for the communities it serves. Visit www.hss.edu/community for more information and to download a copy of the Hospital's plan.