



HEALTH PROMOTION

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APRIL 2011

Monthly Health Observances:

Alcohol Awareness

Stress Awareness

STD Awareness

Month of the Military Child

Schedule of Events/Workshops:

04 Apr:
Urinalysis
Coordinator's
Course
1300-1600

05 Apr:
Stress
Management
0830-1600

Stress Awareness

The operational environment of today's military exposes service members and units to many unforeseen demands. The need to perform under these difficult situations can cause stress reactions. Although stress can have the beneficial effect of sharpening the senses, impelling acts of heroism, and drawing a unit's members closer together, when a service member's ability to deal with stress is exceeding, the consequences may be operationally significant. Independent of whether these consequences are behavioral or physical manifestations, the net result is a loss of manpower and constrained unit resources. The commander's management of stress during these military operations is critical to ensuring mission accomplishment, military readiness and health protection.

This is the perfect time to make changes in your life to reduce the level of stress you experience, improve your health, and make your life more enjoyable. Learn and do something about your stress. Sign up for our bi-monthly Stress Management Workshop!

Three Nutrition Habits that Can Contribute to Stress

Do you like the way you look in the mirror? Is your heart healthy? Is your body healthy? Are your mind and spirit well? There are many different factors that contribute to our self-esteem and overall level of health and wellness. One factor that can impact these variables is stress. Perhaps you find yourself attributing your poor health to your high stress levels. Maybe you have determined that your busy schedule and chaotic lifestyle leaves you with little options other than to choose what is easy: drive-thrus, fast food, and processed, ready-to-eat meals. But, akin to the "chicken and the egg" argument, which one really came first: Stress or the unhealthy eating habits? That can be a tough one to answer. What is for certain is that stress can contribute to unhealthy nutrition, and a poor diet can cause higher stress levels, in addition to overall poor health indicators (e.g., obesity/overweight, underweight, and disease).

If you are stressed, perhaps the dietary choices you make on a daily basis are just making a challenging situation all the more difficult. Here are some habits that you might want to avoid or change if you can identify with them, and your stress level is relatively high:

1. **Drinking too much caffeine.** It might make sense when you feel really tired from a hectic work schedule or the kids keeping you up at night that you hear yourself saying, "I need caffeine and I need it now!" The unfortunate reality is that energy drinks and too much coffee can take you down a terrible downward spiral in which you become psychologically and physically dependent on caffeine. Moreover, too much caffeine can lead to poor concentration and decreased effectiveness, sleep disturbances, and

06 Apr:
Anger
Management
0830-1600

08 Apr:
How to Avoid
Falling for a Jerk or
Jerkette
0830-1600

13 Apr:
Improving Self-
Esteem
0830-1130

14 Apr:
Alcohol 101
0830-1130

15 Apr:
RELAX
0830-1130

increased levels of cortisol in the blood.

2. **Eating the wrong foods.** Stressed out people tend to crave foods high in fat, sugar and salt, due partially to increased levels of cortisol, the stress hormone produced by the body. Think about it: how often have you turned to chips, ice cream, fried foods or easy delivery of pizza after a long, stressful day? Sometimes we think it's easier to go to a drive-thru or head to a local restaurant instead of making something at home. This gets expensive and it's usually unhealthy. It might feel easier to pick up a burger and fries, but what are you really doing to your body? Are the poor health outcomes associated with fast food really worth it? These include, but are not limited to: Type 2 Diabetes, Cancer, Liver Disease, Cardiovascular Disease and Asthma.
3. **Skipping Meals.** Ever find yourself running from one place to another and you realize that you've forgotten to eat? The pang in your stomach and the onset of a brutal headache might just send you to the vending machine looking for anything you can get your hands on and into your stomach. This is where the trip down the rabbit hole begins and often ends. You are now entering a labyrinth of bad choices and whatever stress you are feeling may only get worse. Your brain uses glucose for its primary energy source, and when you skip a meal, your brain is running on empty. Without an optimum energy source, it's tough to keep your emotions on an even keel. Little annoyances turn into major problems if you don't eat a balanced meal or snack routinely throughout the day. And, always, always, always, remember to drink water and hydrate your body.

Alcohol Awareness

Heavy alcohol consumption is a significant problem in the military, affecting both uniformed service members and their families.

Service members often use alcohol to cope with stress, boredom, loneliness and the lack of other recreational activities. Underage service members or children of service members are not immune to this problem. There are an estimated 10.8 million underage drinkers in the United States, and given the increased levels of stress in the military, our young service members, and children of service members are commonly affected.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), alcohol is linked to: 79,000 deaths per year, 5,500 deaths of people under age 21, and hundreds of injuries such as falls, burns, and drowning. (Tricare, 2011)

How to cope with cravings:

- Distract yourself: Physical activities work well. Walk. Dance. Play ball. Play a game. Breathe deep. Go someplace safe where you can't drink.
- Talk about it. Talk to friends or family who support you. Talk to others who've been in treatment. Find out how they dealt with cravings.
- Walk it out. Cravings build, reach a peak, and then pass. You can have a craving without acting on it.

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- Remember your goals. Think about the good things you're getting from treatment. Remember the bad things about drinking.

Lazy Cakes



Lazy Cakes are also known as "the relaxation brownie" because they are brownies with melatonin (a hormone produced by pineal gland in brain that controls sleep cycle), valerian root, passion flower, rose hips,.... baked into them-also sold under names such as "Unwind" and "Simmer."

Sold in convenience stores, tobacco shops and online in 2.5' squares-can be purchased individually for about \$3-4 or by box of 12 for app. \$25. Online they may also be purchased by the case (12 boxes) or by the pallet. Each "cake" consists of two servings according to package, and each serving contains 3.9 mg of melatonin, equaling 7.8 mg per whole "cake." One "cake" has enough melatonin baked in to put the average adult into a deep sleep. The manager of a tobacco shop in Ohio said "I didn't realize that it was two servings and ate the whole one. I fell asleep within 15 minutes." She also noted that her shop was selling "tons of them."

Melatonin can be purchased in its synthetic form as a dietary supplement in many stores and is used to help induce sleep and regulate the sleep cycle. The recommended dosage for the average adult is about **0.2 mg**. Many doctors and health experts consider melatonin dangerous to children.

A 2 yr old in Tennessee, Michael Cummings, ate one bite of a Lazy Cake. He soon began "acting all funny and wouldn't play or nothing," said his uncle, Cameron Cunnings, "he would sleep and he wouldn't wake up," but when he did wake up" he was crying a lot." This incident resulted in an emergency room visit where his family was told that even a small dose of melatonin can be very dangerous for children.

The Memphis-based distributor of Lazy Cakes, Baked World, states that "these are not a snack for children. They are meant as dietary supplement

for adults who lead a stressful, energy drink-fueled lifestyle unwind & relax." Fine print on the product wrapper indicates for "adults only" and "should not be mixed with alcohol or be eaten while driving." Though manufacturers claim Lazy Cakes are intended for adults only, the product is sold in a colorful, psychedelic designed wrapper with a cartoon character, Larry Lazycakes, and a slogan "Peace, love and Lazy Cakes" that are all very appealing to children.

Dr. Ray Smith, Lubbock, TX, indicated that he is more concerned about the Valerian Root content of the brownies. He says that it is comparable to valium and that this herb has history of use as a sedative, similar to the way tranquilizers are used currently. Dr. Ray Smith also stated that "I think it's inappropriate that these Lazy Cakes are sold in candy like packaging and sold as a dietary supplement. That is very sneaky because selling it as a dietary supplement allows the cakes to bypass the FDA." He also mentioned the manufacturers' use of clever marketing combined with the power of chocolate to help boost sales, especially to children.

Data from the National Poison Center indicates that more calls come in related to melatonin than any other herb or supplement-approximately 5,000 calls in 2009.

(Created by Sue Parr, Community Coalitions of Virginia (CCOVA) Public Policy/Legislative Chair and Drug Free Community Project Director for Bragg Hill Community Coalition (Fredericksburg, VA).

STD Awareness

CDC recognizes April as STD Awareness Month, an annual observance to raise awareness about the impact of sexually transmitted disease (STDs) on the health of Americans and the importance of individuals discussing sexual health with their healthcare providers and, if sexually active, their partners.

We encourage you to visit this site

(<http://www.cdcnpin.org/stdawareness/>) throughout the year to access materials, education tools, and information to support STD awareness and prevention activities.

For more information, please contact Health Promotion at 451-2865.