



April 2006

World Health Day Working Together for Health

Each year on April 7th, we recognize World Health Day. This year, World Health Day is devoted to the crisis in the healthcare workforce; the chronic global shortage of skilled health workers. Because of decades of underinvestment in education, training, pay scale, and working environment, world wide we are seeing critical shortages in skills, an increase in healthcare professionals switching careers, and even national or international migration in search of better working conditions.

This year, on World Health Day, hundreds of organizations will host events to celebrate the value of working in the healthcare field and draw attention to the global health workforce crisis. Everyone in every nation is urged to pay attention to this problem and become aware of the

need to improve wages and training programs, as well as preserve the dignity of those working in the healthcare field.

In recognition of World Health Day, we'd like to take this time to express our appreciation to all the healthcare professionals working in the U.S. Public Health Service, within FOH, and at FOH Occupational Health Centers nationwide. These dedicated individuals have devoted their lives and careers to helping others. They are always at the ready to help with relief efforts in times of disasters and work day and night until the job is done. Thank you all!

Buddy Up to Boost Your Workouts

If you're committed to staying healthy and fit but feel like your enthusiasm has started to fizzle, you're not alone. Nobody stays energized about working out every single day. It's normal for the desire to exercise to wane over time so it's important to find different ways to keep interest high throughout the year.

One excellent way to keep your motivation high is to become part of a workout team. Enlist a friend and work out on the "buddy system." Here's how the buddy system can help you meet your fitness goals:

- **Time flies** - Solitary workouts can sometimes feel endless. But you'll be amazed at how time flies when you're working out with a friend.
- **Built-in encouragement** - A workout buddy can give you that boost you need on days when you're losing steam. You can motivate as well as challenge each other.
- **Fewer missed workouts** - You'll be less likely to skip a workout if someone is waiting for you at the gym.

Finding a workout partner (or partners!) can be just what you need to recharge your workouts. It would be helpful if you and your buddy start out at a similar fitness level. If you are both pretty evenly matched, planning workout routines and taking turns on weight equipment will be much easier. You can even enjoy some healthy competition as you progress and motivate each other.

And you don't have to limit yourself to just one buddy. You may not share the full range of interests with just one friend and it can be tricky to coordinate a workout schedule with just one person. So, you may want to find different partners for different activities such as weight training, walking, or aerobics. This way, if it doesn't work with one buddy, you can still look forward to activities with your other partners.

Get started today and get on the buddy system! And don't forget to check with your Wellness/Fitness Center staff for information on group activities that are available in your area.

Breathe Deep For Your Health

Most of us don't think of breathing as something we should practice – like piano! But the *practice* of breathing properly is essential to good health. And most people today would benefit from some lessons in proper breathing.

Becoming a breathing virtuoso won't take hours of practice but it is worth every effort. Breathing is as important to our bodies as nutrition. When you breathe, you take in oxygen and release carbon dioxide – a waste product of the body's metabolism. Unfortunately, the practice of poor breathing actually decreases oxygen intake and interferes with elimination of carbon dioxide, which can cause fatigue, tension, and headaches.

Because our society has become largely sedentary, many people have developed poor breathing habits which deprive them of needed oxygen. The first step to proper breathing is to become aware of your typical breathing pattern. Most people breathe in one of two ways; shallow chest breathing or deep abdominal breathing. If you sit at a desk most of the day, you may have developed the habit of shallow breathing. With this kind of breathing, the chest expands and the shoulders rise up as you inhale.

Abdominal breathing is preferred because it allows you take in the most oxygen. In abdominal breathing, you draw air deep into the lungs and you can see and feel the stomach extend with every inhalation.

You can assess your breathing by placing one hand on your abdomen, right at the waistline. Place the other hand on the center of your chest. Next, breathe normally without trying to change your breathing. Take notice of which hand rises most as you inhale. Is it the hand on your chest or the hand on your belly?

If the hand on your belly rises, it means you are breathing from your abdomen. If the hand on your belly doesn't move or rises less than the hand on your chest, then you are breathing shallowly from your chest and would benefit from learning to breathe more deeply.

One method you can use to train yourself to shift from chest to abdominal breathing is to force out one or two full exhalations that push out the air from the bottom of your lungs. This will create a vacuum that will pull in a deep abdominal breath. The key to deep breathing is to allow your abdomen to extend during inhalation.

At first, you'll notice that abdominal breathing will require a conscious effort and you'll have to remind yourself to do it. Your biggest effort may come from allowing your stomach to stick out when you breathe. But eventually, abdominal breathing will feel more natural. You'll be on your way to becoming an abdominal breathing virtuoso.

"Obstacles are those frightening things that become visible when we take our eyes off our goals."

- Henry Ford

Deskercise Corner: Strong and Flexible Upper Body

Standing Push-off

Stand facing a wall, with your feet apart and about 12 inches from the wall. Rest your palms on the wall at about shoulder height. Bend your elbows and lean toward the wall as far as possible without touching your forearms to the wall. Keep your legs and back straight and stomach tight. Push yourself back to starting position. The farther from the wall you stand, the greater the shoulder effort you'll make to push back. Do this a few times a day.