



March 2006

## World Day of Water

Wednesday, March 22nd is World Day of Water, a day that recognizes the importance of water and its culture worldwide. Water is a basic requirement for all life. Our lives are built around water and its availability. Cities are planned to ensure the availability of fresh water. With our bodies; 80 percent water, and our world; two thirds water – it's clear that water is our source of strength and vitality. In recognition of World Day of Water 2006, Federal Occupational Health's (FOH) Wellness/Fitness team reminds you of the importance of drinking plenty of water to avoid getting dehydrated during exercise.

The combination of our natural processes, environmental factors, and exercise can easily lead to a dangerous state of dehydration. The human body stores limited amounts of water. Through natural processes like breathing, sweating, and eliminating waste, we lose some each day. Environmental conditions like humidity and heat triggers perspiration (to cool the body), and this uses up even more fluids. Add to that, any exercise, even walking, depletes even more water. It's necessary, therefore, to replace the water we lose each day.

With summer around the corner many people set out to exercise outdoors. Remember, in hot or humid temperatures, you can lose from two to three quarts of water per hour. This is dangerous because when fluids in the body are depleted, you can become overheated. Lack of sufficient fluids strains the cardiovascular system, increases blood pressure, decreases performance, and increases the likelihood of heat-related injury. Unfortunately, feeling thirsty isn't a reliable indicator that it's time to drink. By the time you feel thirsty you're probably already dehydrated.

Here's how to stay well hydrated during exercise. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, drink about 16 ounces of water two hours before exercise. Then, during exercise, drink about every 15 minutes to replace fluid lost through sweating. Always remember to drink before you become thirsty. Also, stop exercising if you think you are experiencing heat stress. Be alert for symptoms like nausea, headache, dizziness, and a stoppage of perspiration. Stop exercising and find a shady spot. Drink enough water to lower your body temperature.

## Simplify Your Life: Plan Your Workouts

Has your busy schedule caused you to cancel workouts more than twice a week over the last month? Do you tell yourself, "There's too much on my plate," to exercise today? It's tempting to skip your exercise routine, especially after a long day. But skipping exercise also means that you might miss out on the long term benefits that exercise can offer.

Don't put yourself and your health at the bottom of your 'to do' list. Sometimes it just takes a bit of time management to get your workouts back on track. Try these tips to simplify your life, reprioritize your fitness, and fit your workouts back into your daily schedule.

- Place your workouts in your calendar – and keep the appointment.

- Fit your exercise in during the morning before the day gets too hectic.
- Make a commitment to prioritize exercise in your life; promise to do some kind of exercise each day.
- Make a backup plan. If you make it home at the end of the day without working out, have a home exercise option available.

The important point is to do *something* every day. The key is commitment; it doesn't have to be a 2 hour training session. Recognize that anything you do is beneficial. And remember, don't beat yourself up if you do less than you planned – reward yourself if you manage to squeeze in a 15-minute walk at the end of the day.

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## Ham it up! Train Those Hamstrings

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The hamstrings are three muscles that run from behind and below your knees up the backs of your thighs to the bones you sit on. They do several things: in addition to bending the knees, they stabilize the knee, help to maintain good posture, and allow you to bend forward at the hip.

The hamstrings are extremely important in power activities such as running, jumping, and climbing, but not as vital for simple walking. This is why most sedentary people can manage (despite the occasional backache) with very weak hamstrings, but athletes cannot; they absolutely depend on strong hamstrings for strong power movements.

When hamstring muscles are weak or too tight they can prevent you from reaching full leg extension or from bending over completely. If you can't touch your toes or if you feel more comfortable slouching than sitting up straight, it may be that your hamstrings are too tight. Don't neglect your hamstrings, especially if you enjoy running or racquet sports and if you want to avoid injury.

There are many options available to you to keep your hamstrings healthy and strong. You can work on your hamstrings at your FOH Wellness/Fitness Center or at home, with or without weights. Check with an FOH Wellness/Fitness professional for tips on how to perform hamstring exercises safely.

**"You cannot plough a field by turning it over in your mind.**

*- Author Unknown*

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## Plant a Healthy Herb Garden

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Wherever in the country you live, you can enjoy fresh herbs year around by planning your own indoor herb garden. And cooking with freshly picked herbs is an excellent way to season food with a minimum of fat. In addition, some varieties of herbs add a delicious fragrance to the home.

To start your herb garden, just make sure that you locate your potted herbs near a window that faces south or southeast. If you don't have a sunny window, you can use florescent lights instead. Most herbs need about eight to twelve hours of bright light each day.

Select herbs that complement your needs and cooking preferences. Just four or five hardy varieties like basil, rosemary, mint, and oregano are not only fragrant but easy to grow indoors. Make sure to water your herb garden regularly, but be very careful not to over-water;

this can kill potted plants. Each plant will likely have its own water requirements. It's best to water when your herbs need it rather than on a regular schedule. Test the soil's moisture level with your fingers, and water only when the top 1/2 inch of soil feels dry.

The following are just a few herbs that tend to grow well indoors.

- Basil
- Oregano
- Mint
- Parsley
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Dill
- Fennel
- Chives

Once your herbs are growing, just snip the tops and use as you need for cooking and seasoning. Enjoy!

### Deskercise Corner: Healthy Hams

#### Bum Burn

While sitting at your desk, tighten and squeeze your buttocks, hold five to ten seconds, and release. Repeat six to eight times.

#### Hamstring stretches

From a standing position, extend one leg out in front of your other leg about 10 inches, lift your toes and dig your heel into the ground. Bend the back leg slightly, and put both hands on the thigh of your back leg to support your weight. You should feel the stretch in the back of your front leg. Hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Next push the toes of the front leg down to the floor and hold for another 10 to 15 seconds. Repeat on the other side.