



Wellness-Fitness Program Newsletter

May 2008



Healthy Vision Month

May is Healthy Vision Month, a national eye health observance devoted to promoting the vision objectives in Healthy People 2010.*

One of the goals of Healthy Vision Month is to recognize the importance of protecting and maintaining eye health.

If you spend several hours each day working in front of a computer screen, you may experience blurred vision, itchy eyes, double vision, and eyestrain.

Such eye problems affect around 70 percent of people who work at computers. These are normally short term problems that can usually be corrected if you change some work habits, adjust lighting, and alter the position of the computer screen.

Get your eyes examined

First, check with your eye doctor to rule out any undiagnosed vision problems. If you need glasses, wear them. Then, work with your eye specialist to modify corrective lenses to accommodate computer work. If you use bifocal lenses, check into obtaining a prescription just for computer use.

Computer work can be tricky if you use bifocal lenses. While, some people can manage with bifocal lenses, in most cases, modified lenses will provide greater long term comfort and improved vision. For example if you use bifocal lenses and you don't have to see distant objects clearly while at the computer, you might consider bifocal lenses with the top adjusted for

the computer screen and the bottom adjusted for reading.

Maximize eye comfort

The following tips can help you fight eye discomfort and fatigue.

- Place the computer monitor directly in front of you. The top of the monitor should be slightly below eye level.
- To minimize glare, close window shades and angle your computer screen away from windows, and adjust the screen angle to minimize reflections from overhead lights.
- Your computer monitor's brightness level should be at the same level or brighter than the lighting in the room.
- If necessary, try using a glare-reduction filter on your computer monitor.
- Give your eyes periodic rest breaks. About every 15 minutes, be sure to look away and focus on a something in the distance for at least one to two minutes. Blink frequently.

* Healthy Vision Month is sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the National Eye Health Education Program Partnership. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health, an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

For more information about Healthy People 2010 and the *Healthy Vision Consortium*, visit the Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

Celebrate National Women's Health Week

National Women's Health Week (May 11-17) is a nationwide initiative that is coordinated by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office on Women's Health (OWH). We celebrate National Women's Health Week to remind women that taking care of themselves is important to their loved ones and essential to living longer, healthier, and happier lives.

Because women are often the caregivers for spouses, children, and parents, they sometimes neglect their own needs.

During National Women's Health Week, and all through the year, remember to encourage the women in your life to:

- Exercise most days of the week.
- Eat a nutritious diet.
- Get regular medical check-ups and preventive screenings.
- Avoid risky behaviors, like using tobacco.

To help women get started taking better care of themselves, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has developed the *Bright Futures for Women's Health and Wellness* (BFWHW) Initiative to encourage better health among women across the whole lifespan.

The BFWHW has made available **FREE** health and wellness tools and materials to help women improve both their mental and physical health. The tools, which include *Physical Activity* and *Healthy Eating Tools*, are available online at www.hrsa.gov/womenshealth.

To learn more about National Women's Health Week activities visit the Website at www.womenshealth.gov/whw or call 800-994-9662 (TTY: 888-220-5446).

"Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot; but make it hot by striking."

- William B. Sprague

Revisit resolutions:

Take stock of your health in May

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. It is important for everyone to participate in activities that help maintain a healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity and healthy eating habits can help reduce stress and lower the risk for many chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and depression.

If you made a New Year's resolution to improve your health, it's time to check on your progress. If you haven't made any health goals yet, May is the perfect month to start on the road to healthier living.

Progress check: Flying ahead or fizzling out?

If you established health goals this year, how are you doing? Are you staying motivated? Or are you starting to lose steam? If motivation is a challenge, here are some tips:

- Find an exercise buddy. Having someone to exercise with helps keep you going.
- Set a goal, and decide on a reward you will get when you reach it.
- Think of your exercise sessions as appointments, mark them on your calendar, and keep your appointments.
- Get a notebook and keep a record of your progress.
- Forgive yourself and move on. There will be times that you don't show rapid progress but you are still benefiting from your activities during those times.

Are you ready? Set goals.

If you haven't set goals or need to revise goals, keep in mind that:

- Goals should be measurable (for example, "I will walk 1 mile per day" instead of, "I'll walk regularly").
- Goals should be achievable—for you, not for an Ironman or a triathlon champion!
- Goals should have a timeframe (for example, "walking 3 miles each day for the next 4 weeks").

Grab your pen and take some time to decide a few (just a few) goals that you'd like to work on in the coming weeks. For example, this week I will:

- Eat from the 5 food groups each day
- Work on noticing the triggers that make me want to eat
- Replace soda with water
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk a ½ mile 5 days this week

Log on to the National President's Challenge Website to set a fitness goal and keep track of your progress. You can register at www.presidentschallenge.org.

With summer just around the corner, it's easy to get active in the great outdoors. Now you can enjoy activities such as walking, running, swimming, and biking.

Remember to check with the health professionals at your FOH Wellness/Fitness center for support, ideas, and exercise tips.

Note: FOH recommends that you check with your medical provider before beginning any exercise program.

Nutrition

A Healthier You

If you want to change your diet and improve your nutrition, a good way to begin is by using a food log.

Knowing that you overeat or make unhealthy food choices is only the first half of the information you need for successful lifestyle change. You also need to know when, why, and how much you eat throughout the day.

Before you set out to make nutritional changes, take a few days to a week and simply record what you eat all day long, noting the time, portion sizes, and location (for example, restaurant or home, at the kitchen table or on the sofa in front of the TV, at your desk at work). Be sure to include weekends or days off so you get a full picture of your dietary habits.

On your eating log, also make a note of how hungry you are on a scale of 1 to 10, and jot down any thoughts or emotions you have at the time (anxious, sad, nervous, happy, bored, tired etc.). All this information will help you make changes that you can maintain.

After logging for about a week, you'll have a better idea of what changes you can make that will have the most impact on your health. For example, you

might notice that during the midday, hunger drives you to the candy machine. Simply packing a healthy snack can derail that habit, save you calories and satiate you until dinner.

It's a good idea to start small. Only change one or two habits a week. This way, it won't feel like you're depriving yourself and, it will be easier to make minor adjustments a small chunk at a time.

For ideas and tips about what to buy at the grocery store, check out the *Healthier You* Shopping List which was created by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) as part of the national initiative to help Americans improve their health. The Healthier You shopping list is available at www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/html/shopping_list.html.

Download a food diary at the Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/diary.htm.

FOH, the Occupational Health Provider of Choice for the Federal Government

The mission of FOH is to improve the health, safety, and productivity of the federal workforce. Created by Congress in 1946, FOH is a non-appropriated service agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Program Support Center.

Federal agencies throughout the U.S. and overseas can access FOH services. FOH provides worksite health services, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), Work/Life, Environmental Health and Safety, Organizational and Professional Development, and Training and Education.

Contact FOH at **800-457-9808** or visit us at www.foh.dhhs.gov.
