



Wellness-Fitness Program Newsletter

Summer 2009



Psoriasis Awareness Month

August is Psoriasis Awareness Month. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an estimated 7.5 million Americans suffer from psoriasis – a *non-contagious* chronic disease of the autoimmune system that causes the body's skin cells to grow at an accelerated rate.

Psoriasis often appears on the surface of the skin, causing red, scaly patches. These painful patches can occur anywhere on the body: face, elbows, knees, legs, scalp, hands, back, and soles of the feet. Some forms of psoriasis can also cause joint pain and inflammation.

Psoriasis is an equal opportunity disease affecting men and women equally. It may start in childhood but primarily affects adults.

What is an Autoimmune Disease?

Our immune system helps protect us against pathogens that attack the body. But that system sometimes turns on itself. Instead of recognizing and destroying viruses or bacteria, it produces antibodies against its own healthy cells and tissues.

Treatment

Combinations of topical treatment, light therapy, steroids, and other approaches are often prescribed by doctors to help people manage psoriasis symptoms, fight infection, and control pain. But there is no cure for psoriasis and remedies to control symptoms are often only moderately effective.

Worse, many sufferers become resistant over time so treatments must be monitored carefully and rotated occasionally based on individual sensitivities and reactions.

Living with Psoriasis

People living with psoriasis may experience significant physical discomfort, limitations, and some disability. Itching and pain can interfere with basic functions, such as self-care, walking, and sleep.

This chronic condition can have a significant impact on the lifestyle of those who live with the disease. Psoriasis on hands and feet can prevent individuals from working at certain occupations, playing some sports, and caring for family members. And the frequency of medical care for psoriasis is not only costly; it can interfere with an employment or school schedule.

People who have psoriasis often face discrimination in public places such as gyms and swimming pools because others fear that the disease is contagious and many avoid public situations altogether.

People with moderate to severe psoriasis may feel self-conscious about their appearance and have a poor self-image that stems from fear of public rejection and concerns about intimacy. Psychological distress can lead to significant anxiety and social isolation.

The Psoriasis Foundation works year 'round to dispel myths and improve the lives of people with psoriasis. Throughout the year, the foundation takes action to encourage greater understanding and acceptance of those with the disease.

Learn more at the Psoriasis Foundation Website
www.psoriasis.org

Parkinson's Law and Productivity

Author and historian Cyril Northcote Parkinson, after working within the bureaucracy of the British Civil Service, observed that "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." This came to be known as *Parkinson's Law*.

Parkinson's Law is simply a nifty name for an all too common phenomenon and central cause of frustration for many workers. According to Parkinson's Law, if you have a long time to finish a short project, the task will increase in perceived complexity and scope such that it becomes daunting and hard to accomplish. However, projects given a shorter deadline (that often requires more intense attention) usually result in an end product that is usually of equal quality.

You've probably seen evidence of Parkinson's Law if you've ever worked tremendously hard and met a short deadline on a seemingly overwhelming project – while other times, you struggle to complete a project on time though you've had months to finish.

It isn't laziness. Often when you have a generous amount of time to finish a project, it's easy to underestimate the effort or get bogged down on nonessential details to the detriment of the larger task. That is, you work less productively. If you've ever noticed, that no matter how much time you have to complete a task you still finish it at the last minute, it's Parkinson's Law at work.

So how do you *break* Parkinson's Law and maximize productivity? The easy answer is that you have to make sure you allocate the right amount of time to the right activities. Of course, if this oversimplified solution was easy, there

would be no need for time management and productivity consultation.

Life and work is often distracting and unpredictable. The challenge lies in managing distractions and refocusing successfully when working toward a goal. Try these steps to help keep you focused and effective.

- Plan your daily activities in advance.
- Set tight (but realistic) time limits on projects and then do what you have to in order to satisfy the deadline.
- Break down large projects into smaller essential tasks with timelines and milestones for each one.
- Try to keep time frames short – it increases motivation.
- Commit to stay within the deadline no matter what you do.
- Skip unessential tasks if you think you might go over the deadline.
- Do not let anyone distract you from your work.

When work has a deadline, it's natural to eliminate the needless activities and concentrate only on critical tasks. Without clear milestones and deadlines, it's easy to lose direction and waste precious time shuffling papers, organizing notes, and doing other useless activities that take away from accomplishing projects.

FOH's Organizational Development services help agencies improve efficiency and maximize productivity. Find out more on the Web at www.FOH.hhs.gov.

Everything you want is out there waiting for you to ask. Everything you want also wants you. But you have to take action to get it.

-Jack Canfield

Make No Bones About **Bone Health**

Osteoporosis – disease that causes bones to become less dense – affects about 10 million Americans. An additional 34 million suffer from low bone density, placing them at increased risk of developing osteoporosis later in life. Of the 10 million who have osteoporosis, about 80 percent are women.

However, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), though men are affected later in life than woman, by about age 65, men catch up to women in rate of bone loss.

Bone density peaks in the 20s. At about age 30 for women – and a bit later for men – people begin losing bone density faster than the body can replace it, which makes bones more vulnerable to breaks.

Reduce Your Risks

It's never too late to start boning up on bone health. You can reduce your risk by making some important lifestyle choices. Here are some suggestions to protect your bones:

- Get 1,000 to 1,500 mg* of calcium each day.
- Get 400 to 800 international units of vitamin D each day
- Don't smoke or quit smoking – smoking limits calcium absorption.
- Don't overindulge in alcohol.
- Monitor medications: Some medications affect bone health. Ask your doctor about any medications that may increase osteoporosis risk.
- Maintain a sensible weight.

Stay Active

One way to keep bones strong and reduce the risks of osteoporosis is through weight bearing exercise. Exercise is considered to be weight-bearing when your feet and legs bear all of your weight. Walking, jogging, dancing, and hiking are all weight bearing activities. Sports like tennis, basketball, and soccer are weight bearing as well.

Resistance exercises are also good for bone health. In resistance exercise, your muscles pull or push against something – which builds both bone and muscles. You can use free weights, weight machines, sandbags, or elastic bands for strength training.

Take it Easy

If you decide to increase your weight bearing exercise, take it slow and easy at first. Remember:

- Always warm up before physical activity. Cold muscles are more prone to injury.
- Don't be a "weekend warrior." Compressing your physical activity into one or two days can lead to injuries. Try for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.
- Use the 10 percent rule. When changing your activity level, increase it in increments of no more than 10 percent per week.
- Add activities and new exercises cautiously. It's best to add no more than one or two new activities per workout session.

If you would like help in designing a safe and effective exercise program that will focus on weight bearing activities, check with your Federal Occupational Health Wellness/Fitness professional.

And remember, before beginning an exercise program you should consult your primary care physician for a medical evaluation.

Learn more about how to prevent osteoporosis and improve bone health at the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS) Website at:

www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone/Osteoporosis

*mg=milligram

It's a Wrap

Looking for a way to spice up your healthy menu? Don't overlook the underappreciated collard. Until recently, this traditional Southern favorite was virtually unknown in other parts of the country.

The versatile collard is enjoying a new celebrity status and playing the lead role in the most popular sandwich trend today – the wrap. Because collards are very mild tasting (much like raw cabbage) and have HUGE leaves, they can be used to wrap almost anything.

Making collard wraps is easy and the variety of ways to prepare the leaves adds to the distinctiveness of each dish.

- Use raw leaves for a bit of crunch (cut out or crush the center stem to make it easy to roll).
- Steam or boil the leaves for about 3-5 minutes for a steamed cabbage consistency.
- Microwave them for about 2 minutes for a softer leaf.

Fill your collard wrap with anything found in a traditional sandwich wrap: veggies, meat, hummus, avocado, tomato, sprouts, or even

other greens. Sturdier than lettuce, collard leaves can take the heat if you want to bake or sauté your wraps.

A much healthier alternative to the corn or flour tortilla – which weighs in at about 150 calories, a collard leaf has a nearly negligible amount of calories. Considered a leaf vegetable – or leafy greens, collards are high in dietary fiber, iron, calcium, and folic acid.

In the traditional Southern dish, collards are boiled or simmered for about an hour until they are very soft – very much like cooked spinach. Then, they are served with biscuits or corn bread, which are used to soak up the vitamin-rich broth. If you've never tried a "mess 'o collards," Southern-style, take a chance on this tasty option as well.

On your next trip to the grocery store, don't overlook delicious collards.

For more nutrition information about vegetables and produce visit the Produce for Better Health Foundation at www.pbhfoundation.org.

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

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