

# The Wellness Exchange

May 2006



A Publication of  
**BUSINESS HEALTH SERVICES™**

*Solutions for a Healthier Workplace™*

For more information call 1-800-765-3277 or visit [www.bhsonline.com](http://www.bhsonline.com)



## Minding Your Health

### Improving Your Emotional and Physical Health



May is designated National Mental Health Month. This annual observance sponsored by the National Mental Health Association (NMHA) and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (NCCBH) is designed to increase awareness about mental health and mental illness.

This year's theme, "MIND Your Health," is intended to focus awareness on the connection between your emotional and physical health.

#### Mind Matters

It's important to realize that our minds are not separate entities from our bodies. When we are distressed, our physical health is affected and our spirits waiver. Many physical conditions are actually rooted in a state of mind, or in a history of stress that has never been balanced. Our personal relationships and work abilities are affected by mental and physical health issues. Lives can even be endangered when people are stressed, depressed, anxious, or grief-stricken.

**Up to 75% of doctor's office visits concern stress-related ailments. (APA, 2004)**

Psychological studies show that your mind and your body are strongly linked. As your mental health declines, your physical health can wear down. If your physical health declines, it can make you feel mentally "down." Incorporating a positive outlook into your life can help keep you healthy.

#### Are Your Emotions Affecting Your Physical Health?

Your body responds to the way you think, feel and act. This is often called the "mind/body connection." When you are stressed, anxious or upset, your body tries to tell you that something isn't right. For example, high blood pressure or a stomach ulcer might develop after a particularly stressful event, such as the death of a loved one. The following may be physical signs that your emotional health is out of balance:

- Back/Chest/Neck pain
- Change in appetite
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Dry mouth
- Exhaustion
- General aches and pains
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia (trouble sleeping)
- Lightheadedness
- Sexual problems
- Shortness of breath
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss

#### Balancing Act

Good mental health means striking a balance in all aspects of your life: social, physical, spiritual, economic and mental. Reaching a balance is a learning process. At times, you may tip the balance too much in one direction and have to find your footing again. Your personal balance is unique to you. Your challenge will be to stay mentally healthy by keeping that balance.

#### 6 Tips For Improving Your Mental Health

##### Build self-esteem and confidence

Self-esteem is more than just seeing your good qualities. It is being able to see all of your abilities and weaknesses together, accepting them, and doing your best with what you have.

##### Receive as well as give

Many of us confuse having a realistic view of our good points with conceit. We have trouble accepting kindness from others. Instead of shrugging off a compliment, say "Thank you! I'm glad you think so." Think about other compliments you have had, and how good they made you feel.

##### Make friends who count

Friends help you understand that you are not alone. They help you by sharing your "ups" and "downs", and you in turn help them. Nurture the friendships you have and encourage new friendships.

##### Learn to effectively manage stress

Stress is a normal part of life. Learning to keep a balance among work, family and leisure is difficult. Time management will help you reduce stress and maintain balance.

##### Deal with your emotions

Find out what makes you happy, sad, joyful or angry. What calms you down? Learn ways to deal with your moods.

##### Take a mental health break

Each day, set aside five minutes for a mental health break. Close your office door or go into another room, and day-dream about a place, person or idea, or think about nothing at all!

**For more information on ways to improve your emotional and physical health, contact Business Health Services (BHS) 24 hours a day - 7 days a week. We are here to help!**

**1-800-765-3277**

# Are You A Desktop Diner?

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In today's world of high-stress, high-demand jobs, it can sometimes be difficult to remember the importance of practicing healthy habits while at work. However, whether you sit at a desk, work behind a counter or are on your feet all day, incorporating good nutrition and physical activity into your workday can make a big difference in your work performance, energy and stress level, as well as your overall health.

**Up to 70% of working Americans eat at their desks several times a week.**  
- American Dietetic Association

## At Your Desk For Lunch?

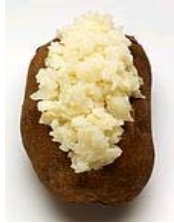
The term "lunch hour" isn't really accurate for most American workers, who typically eat lunch in less than 30 minutes and often do it sitting at their desks. According to a recent article on [www.working.com](http://www.working.com), **the average worker eats lunch in 24 minutes** and many employees view a working lunch - which usually translates into a sandwich quickly consumed in front of the computer - as a normal part of the workday.

One of the biggest drawbacks to eating at your desk is that you're not focused on your food. Instead, you're multi-tasking - sending e-mails, answering the phone, shuffling papers - the perfect recipe for mindless overeating.

**Lunching at your desk means that instead of sitting in front of a computer for eight hours a day, you're doing it for nine.**

Eating at your desk also prevents you from getting up and out of your office. You need to get the heart pumping and the blood flowing again. Lunch is an important time to do that. If you're sitting at your desk eating; you lose that opportunity.

## Are You a Desk Potato?



People who sit at their desks all day without getting any exercise, then go home and sit on the couch all evening lack important physical activity. This lack of physical activity is directly connected to the weight and health problems of many Americans. You may not have much of a choice about being a desk potato but taking a 10 minute walk during your lunch break will burn calories, give you fresh air and stretch your muscles - all of which help your emotional and physical well-being.



## Is That Sanitary?

Eating at your desk can also pose food-safety concerns. Many people don't realize that they turn their desks into bacteria cafeterias because they eat at them, but they never clean them. The phone is the dirtiest area on your desk, the desktop is next, the mouse and the computer follow.

Give your desktop the dirt test: Turn your keyboard over and see how many crumbs fall out. The bigger the snowstorm, the dirtier your desk.

**"The desk, in terms of bacteria, is 400 times more dirty than your toilet,"**  
- Charles Gerba, PhD

## Tips for Desk-Bound Diners

Clearly, it's time to find a new place to dine, like a restaurant or the cafeteria. But for those of us who just can't break away from that ever-expanding pile of work, here are some tips for improving the desk-dining experience:

**Watch what you eat.** Pay attention to what you're putting in your mouth when you eat at your desk and try to avoid multi-tasking. For lunch, you want to pick a meal that's moderate in size but doesn't fill you up.

**Bring your lunch.** Lunch is a good opportunity to eat healthy. Bring a salad with chicken, nuts, beans and veggies - you'll get some great nutrients. Avoid takeout lunches, which tend to be expensive, oversized, heavy in fat and calories, and lacking in nutrients.

**Use a placemat.** Placemats are good because they create a barrier between your food and the bacteria.

**Walk when you can.** If you have to eat at your desk, look for ways to move during the day. Walk to the water cooler, from the farthest spot in the parking lot to the office, to the copy machine - anything you can do to move your muscles. Better yet, get some physical activity when you wake up or at the end of the day to make up for your stagnant workday.

**Disinfect your desk.** Wiping your whole desk area with disinfecting wipes once a day is enough to get it clean. Be sure to get your phone, your keyboard, and your mouse. Avoid touching those surfaces while you're eating. And while it shouldn't replace good old-fashioned hand-washing, it's a good idea to keep some hand sanitizer in your desk drawer, too.