

HEALTHY BUSINESS

The wellness promotion bulletin for employers

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...The prescription for business success

April 2008

HEALTHY PEOPLE =

"Making Health Great in 2008"



Dr. C.V. Alert, Family Physician

As we start this New Year, and even as a new Government presides over the immediate future of the country, it may be wise to reflect on 'where we are', as regards our health. For quite some time now, the chronic non-communicable diseases, otherwise called the lifestyle diseases, have eroded our health. Heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and strokes continue to affect thousands of Barbadians daily, costing us not only millions of dollars but costing us lives and limbs as well.

In 1859, nearly 150 years ago, in the introduction to the classic "tale of two cities", Charles Dickens wrote: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness". This description can perhaps be applied to our current health situation.

The best of times, the age of wisdom

At a Caricom level, a lot of attention has seemingly been paid to the chronic non-communicable diseases in recent years. A Caribbean task force on Health and Development was established in 2003, headed by Sir George Alleyne, a former Director of PAHO. In 2005, Sir George Alleyne noted that an "urgent and sustained response" is needed to deal with the alarming increase in chronic non-communicable disease. Then, in September 2007 the Caricom Heads of Government went one step further: a Heads of Government conference was held to deal specifically with these chronic diseases, emphasizing the apparent seriousness that our leaders placed on these killer diseases.

At a local level, the Government of Barbados, in January 2007, established the first Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases Commission ('Chronic Disease Commission'). It was hoped the Chronic Diseases Commission would make its presence felt in the fight against these lifestyle diseases.

WELLNESS FACT

According to researchers studying the science of beauty, when a man looks at a woman he is looking for sexual cues, signs that point to her reproductive and coital ability. Conversely, when a woman looks at a man, she is primarily interested in personality cues that indicate his character, social and responsibility traits. She has the greater challenge to avoid making a wrong choice. His immediate need is to find a mate for sex, child bearing and status. Her long term plan is to find a mate for security, child rearing and family management, in addition to periodic reproductive urges.

ACT

How best can both male and female improve their chances of making the right decision and of becoming someone's first choice? Exercise, good health and lifestyle habits and a specifically tailored wellness plan not only improve how one looks and performs but also directly and indirectly boost self-esteem, well being and sex appeal.

If you feel good and you feel you look good, chances are you will... and people will notice.

Kojo Carter, WellnessMax Inc.



"I'm prescribing a low-carb diet for your diabetes, a high-carb diet for your colon, a low-fat diet for your heart and a high-fat diet for your nerves."

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The worst of times, the age of foolishness

Since 1976, when some health statistics began to be made available through an annual Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) report, Government's annual spending on health has increased fivefold, with little evidence that the millions of dollars spent are making any difference to the health of the population. Our death rates from heart disease and strokes, for example, remain four to six times higher than our 'big brothers' to the north, Canada and USA. The tag 'Amputation Capital of the World', was first placed on Barbados in the early 1990's when around 100 diabetic patients annually would lose a leg; this figure has steadily risen in the 15 years since, to stand at over 200 amputations per year. Almost daily one hears horror stories of people suffering at our health institutions.

One can hardly find evidence that the millions of dollars being spent are actually making a difference to our health profile.

So, where are we?

Let us return to our annual list of causes of death. We see here in Barbados, as well as in our Caribbean neighbours, that this list is dominated by heart disease, diabetes, the obesity related cancers – breast, uterus and prostate, and strokes (cerebrovascular accidents). The word 'obesity' is not here by accident, for the medical complications of obesity include heart disease, diabetes, certain cancers and hypertension, the latter being a major risk factor for both heart disease and strokes.

Simply put, obesity is the big driving force behind these leading causes of death. And there has been no shortage of statistical evidence, starting from the National Health and Nutrition Surveys of 1969 and 1980, and continuing into this new millennium, that show Barbadian adolescents and adults are 'too big'.

People become obese either because they eat too much, or don't get enough exercise. Barbadians are guilty on both counts.

We must prevent Obesity.

The key to "Making health great in 2008" is to **prevent** obesity, or at least **prevent** the progression to lifestyle diseases in those who are obese. Daily physical activity, making use of our (generally) good weather and exercise-friendly open spaces, including beaches and parks, is a must for everyone: **"45 minutes every day, do it your way"**. Avoid overeating: don't be tempted by the commercial outlet at every street-corner, whether they are offering fried chicken, pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs, fried fish, and barbequed pig tails; instead seek out the fruit and vegetable section in the supermarkets, markets and stalls wherever they are sold.

We need to fast-forward from 'the age of foolishness' to 'the age of wisdom'. Lifestyle **disease prevention is the key**, and each individual, whether young or old, must take responsibility for his/her health. We must try to limit the rise in obesity and its related medical problems. We need the 'urgent and sustained' response that Sir. George Alleyne spoke about. **"Eat less, exercise more"** should be the mantra of each and every Barbadian.

SPOTLIGHT



Lynette Andrew
WellnessMax Inc.

HP=HB IS BACK!

It's good to be back after a four year absence! HP=HB is distributed FREE, made possible through sponsorship by the corporate community. The purpose of HP=HB bulletin is to provide information on 'wellness promotion' as a proactive management strategy and to sensitize business leaders to the relationship between "wellness and productivity" in the workforce. Through the bulletin you have access to advice and tips that can help you to create a more efficient, productive and growth-oriented organization. The bulletin will now be issued every two months. Specific features include:

ARTICLES - Highlighting issues influencing the productive capacity of people at work.

CARTOONS - Graphically illustrating some of the main health issues affecting people at work

WELLNESSFACT - Provides current information on wellness issues. **ACT** - offers easy to implement solutions to handle wellness issues.

SPOTLIGHT - Provides information and news from WellnessMax Inc and other organizations; upcoming events.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Like WellnessFact, Food For Thought provides information on issues affecting health, specifically focusing on Nutrition.

uSpeak - A new feature inviting your letters, reviews, comments, feedback, reports on implementation of programmes, etc.

UPCOMING SEMINAR - MAY 2008

Look out for details of "Healthy People=Healthy Business", a seminar addressing the benefits of workplace wellness promotion for business leaders, entrepreneurs, human resource and health & safety practitioners.

The Facilitator will be Dr. Geoffrey Frankson, a medical Doctor with an M.A. in Human Sciences from Oxford University, U.K. and founder and CEO of Better Health Ltd, Trinidad.

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**"Weight lifting can help lower your cholesterol.
Load up your fork with veggies and lift it
to your mouth. Do 3 sets of 15 reps daily."**

Eat Well and Feel Well - Part One



By Ms Ruth Smith, BSc (Hons) Registered Dietitian (RD) (UK)

Many Barbadians are affected by at least one chronic disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or being overweight. These conditions can greatly reduce one's quality of life, and yet can be prevented or improved by making healthier food choices and taking regular exercise.

The first step to eating healthily is to eat three meals each day. When the body doesn't receive a constant supply of nutrients (every 4-6 hours) it becomes physically and mentally compromised. The brain and body slow down and are less able to function well, making the normal thought process and decision-making difficult.

Research also shows that people who skip meals, particularly breakfast, are more likely to snack on 'junk' foods high in fat and sugar, such as potato chips and candy. Eating these foods on a regular basis is likely to lead to weight gain and hence increase the risk of developing conditions like high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and increased blood glucose (sugar).

Therefore, making time to eat breakfast before starting work is a very important dietary choice. Breakfast should be based around a high fibre carbohydrate food such as a breakfast cereal, bread or crackers. Good choices include oats, Weetabix, bran flakes, shredded wheat, multigrain bread and whole wheat crackers.

In addition, a low fat unsweetened milk makes a good choice. Unsweetened soya milks or lactose free milks are good alternatives for people with lactose intolerance. Fruits, such as currants, bananas or apples, can be used to naturally sweeten breakfast cereals, however people with diabetes should eat only one fruit portion at a time.

For people who prefer a cooked breakfast, good choices include boiled or scrambled eggs, tuna, or sardines canned in water. Foods high in saturated fat such as hot dogs, tinned meats, and cheese should not be eaten on a regular basis. Try to boil, grill, steam and bake foods rather than frying them.

Many people report lack of time being the biggest reason for not eating breakfast. However, a small behaviour change such as waking up ten minutes earlier than usual to allow time for breakfast far outweighs the health consequences of not eating breakfast. To save time in the morning, press that suit, polish those shoes, or make the children's lunch the night before work. This small change will make a big difference.

If you leave more than 46 hours between your meals, eat a snack in between to keep you going. Starving your body for long periods of time will not benefit you in the long run. Good snack options include: a piece of fruit, 4-6 wholewheat crackers, 2-3 Digestive biscuits, some unsalted popcorn, a glass of low-fat unsweetened milk, or a cereal bar.

You should aim to get a range of nutrients from your meals to optimise your health. A well-balanced meal should include three main food groups- a low-fat protein, a starchy carbohydrate, and plenty of vegetables. For example, grilled/steamed fish or baked/boiled chicken with 1-2 small pot-spoons of rice or 2-3 medium potatoes, and 2-3 different vegetables. Vegetables provide essential vitamins, minerals and antioxidants which play an important role in protecting our body cells to prevent diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

Many people pay attention on a daily basis to the clothes they wear, how they wear their hair, and what type of cell phone they use. Yet often they do not pay attention to what kind of food they put in their mouth or when they eat. Your food choices are imperative to your health. Make it a priority to become informed and make good food choices for yourself and your family. If you don't protect your health you may lose it. Eat well and feel well!

**If you have a specific chronic disease such as diabetes, kidney disease, or cancer, please ask your doctor to refer you to a Registered Dietitian for individual advice.*

More healthy eating advice will follow in the next edition.

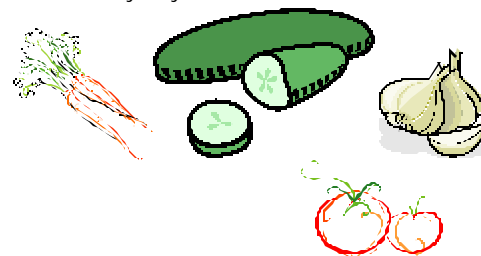
Popular Food Myth

Many people mistakenly believe that they are making a lower fat choice by using vegetarian cheese instead of regular cheese. Vegetarian cheese actually contains the same amount of fat and calories as regular cheese. The difference is that vegetarian cheese is made using a non-animal source of rennet, an ingredient normally obtained from the cow, which helps to form the texture of cheese. If you want to reduce your calorie and fat intake, use a reduced fat cheese, such as a Light Cheddar, Mozzarella or Edam Cheese, Low Fat Cream Cheese or Cottage Cheese.

Contact Ruth Smith at Email: dietitian@caribsurf.com

FOOD FOR THOUGHT by KOJO

So called super foods provide all the minerals, vitamins and antioxidants, amino acids, bio-flavonides, trace elements and dietary fibre the body needs. They can promote and support weight loss, cardio-vascular function, intestinal and digestive health, cleansing and detoxification. They can help protect against heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, joint pains, asthma, indigestion and other common medical conditions. Some super foods are - wheatgrass, blue berries, spirulina, quinoa, pomegranate, garlic, carrot, soya bean, tomato and cucumber. Any of these foods can be added to breakfast or lunch every day.



READ AND PASS ON

Is your workstation “ergonomically” correct?



Karen M. Jones, MPT, ATC
(Registered Physiotherapist)

Many times, people look for a job that they “fit” into. Once they obtain their desired position, they find that they have to adjust to the set up that was there before they came along... not so!

Ergonomics is the study of how to adapt the workplace to you. Plain and simple, your work environment should be adapted to you, not you to the work environment. When your every day workstation fits your needs, you are more efficient in your ability to carry out your job duties and more importantly, you lower the risk of getting a repetitive stress injury and jeopardizing your health. You may have noticed your office’s receptionist shaking her hands in an effort to rid herself (or himself) of the writhing pain in the wrist and fingers after a full day of typing, but chances are, if the keyboard was ergonomically situated to that individual’s needs, such symptoms could have been avoided.

Repetitive stress injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome or tendonitis, which occur on the job, are a result of muscle imbalances, overworked tendons and possible nerve entrapments from faulty body mechanics. Initially, these stresses may seem insignificant, but as time goes on, the problem becomes worse and may eventually lead to disability if left untreated. There are many things that must be considered when designing your work space to fit your needs. Taking an active role in identifying potential problems and ensuring that they are addressed in a timely fashion will allow for more employee comfort and essentially, enhance company productivity.

The following are some questions employees should ask themselves when evaluating their work area, accompanied by suggestions that will help to guide you towards securing a more ergonomic-friendly environment.

How can I set up my desk so that I have good posture and do not place undue stress on my body?

- ☑ Invest in a high back, sturdy chair that is on wheels so you are not always twisting your torso in one direction, but rather twisting the chair.
- ☑ Use a lumbar roll support to provide low-back comfort to help maintain the natural curve in your spine.
- ☑ When sitting, place your hips and knees at a 90 degree angle -- imagine an upside down “L” -- with your feet flat on the floor or with a foot rest positioned under your desk.
- ☑ Support your elbows on an armrest, also placed at 90 degrees, and allow your shoulders to be relaxed.
- ☑ Position your keyboard so that your wrists are not bent up or down; better yet, use a wrist pad/cushion at the base of your keyboard to help maintain a neutral position.
- ☑ Place your computer monitor at eye level. If you are doing other types of desk work, use a document holder to minimize repetitive lifting and lowering of the head and reduce the strain on your neck.

Am I using proper body mechanics? Many jobs require moderate to heavy lifting that, if done improperly, may cause some to suffer from backaches. Use your legs by bending your knees to squat when lifting cumbersome objects, remembering to engage your stomach muscles and not hold your breath. Never twist your back when moving something heavy, but rather, hold it close to you and turn your whole body. Whenever the weight of something is questionable, ask for help to assist in the lifting process.

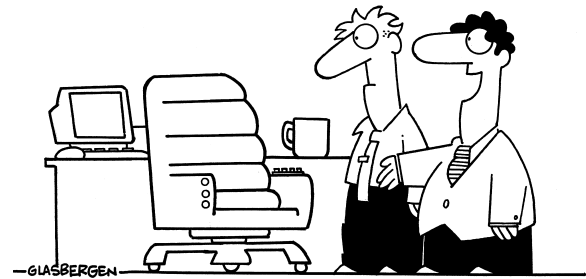
Am I keeping tools that I need to use regularly in close proximity? If not, rearrange your space so that everything is convenient for use. For example, if you are required to answer the phone often, have it within a few inches close to your dominant hand. If you are an employee that is required to answer a high volume of calls, ask your employer to invest in a headset.

How are environmental factors affecting my job? Take lighting and temperature of the work place into account. This applies to indoor as well as outdoor vocations. Protect your eyes (i.e. some computers have an anti-glare screen) and wear appropriate clothing and foot wear dependent on your job requirements that will facilitate comfort.

Am I taking regular and periodic breaks? Plan and implement consistent, yet short, breaks throughout the day so that your hands and body are not subjected to too much fatigue. Put into practice a strategy (i.e. use a timer) so you do not get excessively involved in the activity and forget to take rest periods.

If you find that there are some areas that may place you or your co-workers at risk, contact your employer or health care professional to implement changes to better your work environment to suit you.

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“I love my ergonomic office chair. It reclines, has heated vibrating massage, and provides electro-shock therapy at the end of a stressful day!”

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Email: wellnessmax@sunbeach.net Tel: (246) 428-5375
Web: www.wellnessmaxxim.com Join our mailing list on line.
Editorial Team: Lynette Andrew, Michael Kojo Carter, Anthony Johnson, Annette Browne

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