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Workplace Savings & Benefits

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SEPTEMBER 2018 Health & Wellbeing Newsletter



Looking after your back

According to the NHS, back pain is the single largest cause of disability in the UK and lower back pain accounts for 11% (NHS 2016). So why do so many people suffer from back pain, especially when there is no apparent trauma?

Let's begin by clearing up a few myths:

“Bad’ posture gives you back pain”

Not at all, in fact no particular posture will give you back pain directly. The problem is the same posture all of the time. The enemy of your body is staying still.

“My core is under active”

The ‘core’ muscles are responsible for supporting you and they all need to work equally and sequentially. The problem with lower back pain isn't that the muscles are under or over active it's that these muscles don't work equally.

“When you have back pain, the best thing is to rest”

Everyone's lower back pain is different, but with regular movement you are keeping the muscles active. Being stationary causes muscles to seize up and spasm more, causing more pain.

Top Tips for Lower Back Pain

Be active – this doesn't mean you have to join the gym! You can be active just by moving more. Try and build some basic strengthening exercises into your daily life. You could squat or lunge as you are waiting for the kettle to boil! Turn it into a habit like brushing your teeth.

Stretch regularly – especially your glutes, hamstrings and quads. Do this at regular intervals and not just when you are stiff.

Prevention is always better than cure. Lower back pain can creep up on you if you have a stationary job so keep moving and keep stretching.

Always seek professional advice if you are concerned.

Cholesterol

Hear the word cholesterol and think it's all bad? Well, it definitely is not if kept under control.

What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in our blood and every cell in our body. Cholesterol performs many essential functions such as producing vitamin D, bile for digestion and hormones. Therefore, cholesterol is vital to maintain good health so it is not all bad. However, raised levels in the blood can negatively affect your health. It is largely generated in the liver as the body produces all it needs, but it can also be found in certain foods such as eggs, cheeses, red meat and butter.

Cholesterol is carried in the blood by proteins and when they combine they become lipoproteins in two main forms:

High density lipoproteins (HDL) – known as 'good cholesterol' - helps to carry cholesterol away from cells to the liver for filtration

Low density lipoproteins (LDL)– known as 'bad cholesterol' - if levels are high, it can carry too much cholesterol to the cells and cause a build-up in the artery walls which may lead to clogging, stroke or heart attack.

There are other types of cholesterol such as triglycerides which are mainly found in animal product foods such as meat and dairy. Having high LDL and triglycerides and not enough HDL cholesterol puts you at a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

Top tips to improve cholesterol

- **Cut back** on saturated and trans fats found in foods such as: crisps, biscuits, red meat, cheese, butter, eggs, pastries, processed meat
- **Eat more** – omega 3 and unsaturated fats such as oily fish, unsalted nuts/seeds, olive oil
- **Increase activity** – aim for at least 150 minutes of moderately intense exercise per week such as brisk walking, cycling etc.

Quote of the month

“ Those who think they do not have the time for healthy eating will sooner or later have to find the time for illness ”

- Edward Stanley

Tip of the month

Make use of the pumpkin seeds that you remove before carving your Halloween masterpiece. Clean, then boil for 10 minutes until soft. Dry them and place in the oven on low (130°C) with a little olive oil and enjoy as a healthy snack. The flesh can be used to make a hearty pumpkin soup.



Facts of the month

Eating pumpkin seeds can positively lower your LDL cholesterol levels. They are rich in phytosterol, which block absorption of the more harmful cholesterol.

Did you know the name 'Pumpkin' comes from the Greek word 'pepon' which translates to 'large melon'



Food of the month

Pumpkins – Not only great for making scary Halloween faces but they are great to eat also. Pumpkins contain high levels of potassium which helps reduce blood pressure. They are high in fibre so are great for digestion and they contain numerous vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A which is great for eye health.