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“The First Wealth is Health.”

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

No doubt, we live in challenging times! And while we may not have the ability to impact national or world events, we are each uniquely situated to directly impact our own, individual health! Here are a few ideas to get started getting back into the pink this winter:

- **Get a flu shot.** Julie Gerberding, M.D., Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says, “Get out there and get protected, protect others and for sure protect your children.” Dr. William Shaffner of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases adds, “People should start getting vaccinated now, yesterday actually!”
- **Avoid the workplace sources of illness and infection.** The primary culprit? Your office keyboard, which microbiologist Charles Gerba of the University of Arizona describes as a “bouillibaisse of bacteria.” He recommends frequent hand washing with soap and hot water (hand sanitizers often remain on the skin and don’t penetrate deeply enough beneath the surface). Also, he suggests that you avoid touching your face and eyes.
- **Do Your “D.”** The American Institute of Medicine has strongly affirmed the value of vitamin D for the entire population. The Institute cited mounting evidence that vitamin D is a significant factor in bone strength and may reduce the risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. At least 400 IUs of Vitamin D is recommended daily and can be found naturally in “oily” fish such as mackerel, salmon, trout and orange roughy or can be ingested as a supplement.
- **Avoid catastrophizing about events we can’t control.** Research psychologist Paul J. Lavrakas reports that as many as 16 million Americans are “suffering terribly” and their health is “likely to be severely impacted” by this type of worry. “Catastrophizing” means that we assume the worst about any situation that is perceived as threatening. But worry and hand-wringing are totally unproductive and can make us vulnerable to illness and infection. Better to call your Employee Assistance Program and “talk it out.”
- **Realize that stress and sleep deprivation add pounds.** Both sleep deprivation and excessive stress will release cortisol into your bloodstream. Cortisol is a corticosteroid hormone that is secreted by the adrenal gland and contributes to significant fat deposits around the waist. So get to bed early and realize that stress (worry) has never solved a single problem!
- **Get on-board with the new health guidelines.** After an extensive study of Americans’ exercise patterns, an expert panel commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services found that “regular physical activity” can cut the risk of heart attacks and stroke by at least 20%. For the average adult, this can be achieved with 2.5 hours of moderate aerobic activity per week. Brisk walking, hiking, biking or treadmill laps will meet this prescription!
- **Get in the shape of your life!** Struggling to lose weight or become fit? Your Employee Assistance Program offers many special programs, discounts and incentives from many well-known companies including Jenny Craig®; Bally’s Total Fitness®; Workouts for You®; Apex Nutrition®. To learn more about these, visit the Lifestyle Benefits at your EAP Information Resources Website or contact an EAP counselor by phone for details.