

JIFNEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness



Things are moving and changing quickly with the news of coronavirus (COVID19). In an effort to help employees combat the illness, many companies have asked their teams to work from home when possible.

Hurray! No more commute, you get to work in your pajamas and you're free to rummage through the fridge while on a conference call. But once the initial excitement of working from home wears off, it can be daunting to realize it's up to you to make this thing, well, work.

Telecommuting presents a unique set of challenges, especially for those who have never done it before or who don't know how long it will last. Physical therapist Mary Morrison, PT, DScPT gives strategies on how to keep your healthy habits and productivity in check while working remotely.

Stick with a routine. It might be tempting to roll directly out of bed and onto the couch to start checking email, but you'll need to establish a schedule when it comes to working from home. Set an alarm clock, eat breakfast, take a shower and get dressed as if you were actually going into work. You don't have to put on a suit or tie, but you'll need to treat the day like any other day at the office, minus the office. Determine regular working hours and factor in breaks and meal times.

Have a dedicated workspace and set up. It can be tempting to work from your bed, but it's important to set boundaries when it comes to remote work. For some people, boundaries mean no TV or making sure the kids or pets are in a separate room. Working from home also means you'll have to fight off distractions of other things you'll be tempted to do around the house. (Like when you go into the kitchen to get a quick snack and the next thing you know you're Marie Kondo'ing your entire pantry.) If you find yourself easily distracted, you might be someone who needs to set firmer boundaries when it comes to WFH. Setup a desk area where you'll aim to spend the majority of your day and stock this area with everything you'd find back in the office. Position your desk and chair so that your spine is aligned and make sure your chin is pointed straight ahead. If you prefer, ditch the chair altogether and opt for a standing desk – whatever set up will make you feel more productive and

ready to work.

Set goals. Write our daily and weekly to-do list involving your work and everything that needs to get done. You'll feel better prepared knowing what's ahead and having some sort of game plan for tackling it.

Get up and move. It can be tempting to work for hours at a time without taking a break, especially if you're comfortable with where you are. But it's important to establish regular breaks throughout the day (and also to schedule your workouts). Mary suggests setting a timer every hour to remind you to get up and move or stretch. It's important to focus on active stretching for your lower and upper back since you'll likely be working on a laptop with a smaller screen. Try movements like warrior one and other hip flexor stretches. If you're feeling particularly stir crazy, opt for a quick walk around the block. And try your best to not eat at your desk. Use the opportunity to work from home to develop good habits.

Check in often. Working from home can sometimes be isolating. (Plus we know it's important for our mental health to make connections and have friendships.) Check in with people often, even if you don't have a specific work related question. Text friends or colleagues throughout the day (but be careful not to get too distracted with your phone) and schedule video calls when possible. Virtual connections will never replace the importance of face-to-face interaction, but it can help make you feel like you're more than just out there in the void. Also make sure you're touching base with your boss or employees. Telecommuting thrives when there's an emphasis on trust and communication. Plus, regular check-ins with your team can help identify priorities and potential obstacles and keep people accountable.

Know when to log off. Shut down and stop working when you'd normally leave the office. Just as you established your regular working from home hours and routine, determine when you'll stop working for the day. And although it can be challenging in our 24/7, always connected world – you'll need a good worklife balance even more since your work is now home with you all day.

HOW TO STAY SAFE THIS SUMMER REDCROSS.ORG

Summer is just ahead when we all spend a lot of time outside, enjoying the outdoors. But this year summer fun will be different due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The American Red Cross offers safety tips you can follow.

- If your community is reopening, know what precautions to take in public settings.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others.
- Wear cloth face coverings, especially in crowded areas. Do not place them on children under age 2.
- Help limit your risk by taking steps to reduce the number of places you go and your exposure to other people.
- Order food and other items for home delivery or curbside pickup, if possible.
- Visit the grocery store and other stores in person only when necessary.
- Stay at home if you are sick

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WATER SAFETY

Many public pools and beaches may be closed this summer. Follow the guidance of state and local officials. Make sure the area is designated for swimming. Once there, maintain social distancing, both in and out of the water, between you and people who don't live with you. If you don't think your child can do this, come up with another activity.

- Wear face coverings on land, especially when physical social distancing is difficult. Do not wear them in the water as it may be difficult to breathe.
- Don't share goggles, nose clips, snorkels or other personal items.
- A kiddie or inflatable pool can be a great way to have fun, but be sure to provide constant supervision to children in and around the water.

BE WATER SMART

Have swimming skills and know how to help others. Achieve the skills of water competency: be able to enter the water, get a breath, stay afloat, change position, swim a distance and then get out of the water safely.

- Download the Red Cross Swim App and take our new free Water Safety for Parents and Caregivers online course.
- Around the pool, have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water, but do not rely on life jackets alone.
- Don't swim alone and only swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
- In the event of an emergency, reach or throw an object to the person in trouble. Don't go in! You could become a victim yourself.
- Constantly supervise children around water and avoid distractions. If you have a pool, secure it with appropriate barriers.
- In group situations, designate a water watcher whose sole responsibility it is to oversee the activity in the water.

- If a child is missing, check the water first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability

GRILLING SAFETY

Summer is a popular time for grilling family meals at home. Yet grilling fires spark more than 10,000 home fires on average each year. To avoid this:

- Always supervise a barbecue grill when in use. Don't add charcoal starter fluid when coals have already been ignited.
- Never grill indoors—not in the house, camper, tent or any enclosed area.
- Make sure everyone, including children and pets, stay away from the grill.
- Keep the grill away from the house or anything that could catch fire.
- Use the long-handled tools especially made for cooking on the grill.

HELP SAVE LIVES THIS SUMMER

Give blood, platelets or plasma—we're all in this together! Visit redcrossblood.org for more information or to schedule your donation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Red Cross has several resources to help protect yourself, your loved ones and your community:

- Learn how to save a life with the Red Cross First Aid App and training courses.
- Receive customized weather alerts and warnings with our Emergency App.
- Enable the Red Cross skills on Amazon Alexa-enabled devices for valuable first aid information, to schedule a blood donation, receive warnings about an approaching hurricane or make a financial donation to the Red Cross.



STRENGTHEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH 4 SIMPLE STRATEGIES

HEALTH.CLEVELANDCLINIC.ORG

You want — no, NEED — to stay healthy and functioning at a 10. Maybe you're on the healthcare frontlines during a pandemic. Or maybe you're working from home while simultaneously home-schooling three kids. Bottom line, your universe needs you healthy.

Good news! While there's no magic "healthy pill," there are tried-and-true ways to take your immunity superpowers up a notch. Preventive medicine physician and wellness expert Sandra Darling, DO, shares her top tips for staying healthy.

1) FOCUS ON FOOD

"I believe in the power of immune-boosting foods," says Dr. Darling. "Choosing whole, unprocessed foods does wonders for overall health." Dr. Darling recommends these immunity boosters:

Garlic: Allicin, a compound in garlic, is well known for its ability to boost the immune system. The most benefit comes from eating one-half of a raw garlic clove daily. If you can't stomach raw garlic, the next best thing is to roast it.

Prebiotics: Robust gut bacteria protect us against infection. Keep those bacteria healthy with prebiotics that contain fiber, specifically inulin fiber. Excellent sources of prebiotics are Jerusalem artichokes, green bananas or plantains, jicama root and asparagus.

Vitamin C-rich foods: Vitamin C is known to boost immunity. One study found that older adults who ate kiwi every day for a month had a significant decrease in the severity and duration of upper respiratory infection symptoms. "People often reach for orange juice to get vitamin C, but juice has a lot of sugar," says Dr. Darling. "It's better to get vitamin C from oranges, broccoli, kiwi or cantaloupe."

Antioxidants: Stress can lead to lowered immunity and make you more prone to illness. Colorful fruits and vegetables including berries, carrots and spinach have antioxidants that protect you against oxidative stress, which translates to a stronger immune system.

2) LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENTS

Living under constant stress, even lowgrade, that continues day in and out, causes the body to produce too much cortisol, the stress hormone. Over time, elevated cortisol lowers your resistance to fighting off infection and contributes to poor sleep and higher blood pressure.

Protect yourself from stress and bolster your immune system with a few lifestyle tweaks:

Sleep: Yep, it's easier said than done (especially if you're an insomniac). But here's the deal — you need seven to eight hours of quality sleep each night to fight off infection. "Prioritize sleep. If you need help, choose a tried-and-true technique known as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia, or CBTI," says Dr. Darling. "Talk with your doctor to find a reputable therapist or download a CBTI app."

Meditation: Even five minutes a day of guided meditation, or simply sitting quietly and focusing on your breath, can make a difference. Meditation lowers your heart rate and blood pressure and reduces anxiety. Plus, it's calming. So it's not surprising that it also helps you sleep.

Exercise: "Exercise increases your resilience so you can fight off infection," says Dr. Darling. "Our bodies function better when we're



physically active every day." Dr. Darling recommends carving out at least 10 minutes a day, ideally 30 minutes, and doing a mixture of cardio and strength training.

3) ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

A positive mindset is vital for health and well-being. Research shows that positive thoughts reduce stress and inflammation and increase resilience to infection — while negative emotions can make you more susceptible to the common cold and flu.

"The COVID19 pandemic is scary, so it's easy to spiral down in negative thoughts," says Dr. Darling. "The story we tell ourselves is crucial. Change it from 'It's not going to be OK' to 'I am safe at home with the people I love.' Start your day with a positive thought or even a mantra such as, 'I am well.'"

4) NATURAL IMMUNITY AIDS

If you're ready to give it all you got when it comes to avoiding the coronavirus, consider these extra measures:

Supplements: "A lot of people are deficient (or low) in vitamin D, and a deficiency may increase your susceptibility to infection," says Dr. Darling. "Get outside for fresh air and sunshine, but I also recommend taking a daily supplement of 1,000 to 2,000 IUs of vitamin D."

Essential oils: Eucalyptus and tea tree oils have antiviral properties that may protect you against infection from viruses. Use in an oil diffuser to inhale them or make a hand sanitizer using tea tree oil mixed with aloe vera gel and isopropyl alcohol. Studies also show that lavender essential oil has a calming effect, so it can help ease anxiety and improve sleep. Add a few drops to a warm bath or use the oil in a diffuser while you work or sleep.

And sometimes, even with lots of sleep and vitamin C, superheroes get sick. It's OK! The key is to take time off to recharge (and avoid getting others sick). In no time, you'll be donning your cape again.

But for your health and the health of those around you, make sure you're fully supercharged before you do.

15 FOOD THAT WILL BOOST THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

HEALTHLINE.ORG



Feeding your body certain foods may help keep your immune system strong. If you're looking for ways to prevent colds, the flu, and other infections, your first step should be a visit to your local grocery store. Plan your meals to include these 15 powerful immune system boosters.

1) CITRUS FRUITS | Vitamin C is thought to increase the production of white blood cells, which are key to fighting infections. Almost all citrus fruits are high in vitamin C. With such a variety to choose from, it's easy to add a squeeze of this vitamin to any meal.

2) RED BELL PEPPERS | Ounce for ounce, red bell peppers contain almost 3 times as much vitamin C as a Florida orange. They're also a rich source of beta carotene. Besides boosting your immune system, vitamin C may help you maintain healthy skin. Beta carotene, which your body converts into vitamin A, helps keep your eyes and skin healthy.

3) BROCCOLI | Broccoli is supercharged with vitamins and minerals. Packed with vitamins A, C, and E, as well as fiber and many other antioxidants, broccoli is one of the healthiest vegetables you can put on your plate. The key to keeping its power intact is to cook it as little as possible — or better yet, not at all. Steaming is the best way to keep more nutrients in the food.

4) GARLIC | Garlic adds a little zing to food and it's a must have for your health. Early civilizations recognized its value in fighting infections. Garlic may also slow down hardening of the arteries, and there's weak evidence that it helps lower blood pressure. Garlic's immune boosting properties seem to come from a heavy concentration of sulfur-containing compounds, such as allicin.

5) GINGER | Ginger is another ingredient many turn to after getting sick. Ginger may help decrease inflammation, which can help reduce a sore throat and inflammatory illnesses. Ginger may help with nausea as well.

6) SPINACH | Spinach made our list not just because it's rich in vitamin C — it's also packed with numerous antioxidants and beta carotene, which may both increase the infection-fighting ability of our immune systems. Similar to broccoli, spinach is healthiest when it's cooked as little as possible so that it retains its nutrients. However, light cooking makes it easier to absorb the vitamin A and allows other nutrients to be released from oxalic acid, an anti-nutrient.

7) YOGURT | Look for yogurts that say "live & active cultures" printed on the label, like Greek yogurt. These cultures may stimulate your immune system to help fight diseases. Try to get plain yogurts rather than the kind that are flavored and loaded with sugar. Yogurt can also be a great source of vitamin D, so try to select brands fortified with

this vitamin. Vitamin D helps regulate the immune system and is thought to boost our body's natural defenses against diseases.

8) ALMONDS | When it comes to preventing and fighting off colds, vitamin E tends to take a backseat to vitamin C. However, this powerful antioxidant is key to a healthy immune system. It's a fat-soluble vitamin, which means it requires the presence of fat to be absorbed properly. Nuts, such as almonds, are packed with the vitamin and also have healthy fats.

9) SUNFLOWER SEEDS | Sunflower seeds are full of nutrients, including phosphorous, magnesium, and vitamins B6 and E. Vitamin E is important in regulating and maintaining immune system function. Other foods with high amounts of vitamin E include avocados and dark leafy greens. Sunflower seeds are also incredibly high in selenium. Just 1 ounce contains nearly half the selenium that the average adult needs daily.

10) TURMERIC | This bright yellow, bitter spice has also been used for years as an anti-inflammatory in treating both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Research shows that high concentrations of curcumin can help decrease exercise induced muscle damage. Curcumin has promise as an immune booster (based on findings from animal studies) and an antiviral. More research is needed.

11) GREEN TEA | Green tea really excels in its levels of epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), another powerful antioxidant. In studies, EGCG has been shown to enhance immune function. The fermentation process black tea goes through destroys a lot of the EGCG. Green tea, on the other hand, is steamed and not fermented, so the EGCG is preserved. Green tea is also a good source of the amino acid L-theanine. L-theanine may aid in the production of germ-fighting compounds in your T cells.

12) PAPAYA | Papaya is another fruit loaded with vitamin C. You can find double the daily recommended amount of vitamin C in a single medium fruit. Papayas also have a digestive enzyme called papain that has anti-inflammatory effects. Papayas have decent amounts of potassium, magnesium, and folate, all of which are beneficial to your overall health.

13) KIWI | Like papayas, kiwis are naturally full of a ton of essential nutrients, including folate, potassium, vitamin K, and vitamin C. Vitamin C boosts the white blood cells to fight infection, while kiwi's other nutrients keep the rest of your body functioning properly.

14) POULTRY | When you're sick and you reach for chicken soup, the soup may help lower inflammation, which could improve symptoms of a cold. Poultry, such as chicken and turkey, is high in vitamin B6. About 3 ounces of light turkey or chicken meat contains nearly one-third of your daily recommended amount of B6. Vitamin B6 is an important player in many of the chemical reactions that happen in the body. It's also vital to the formation of new and healthy red blood cells. Stock or broth made by boiling chicken bones contains gelatin, chondroitin, and other nutrients helpful for gut healing and immunity.

15) SHELLFISH | Shellfish isn't what jumps to mind for many who are trying to boost their immune system, but some types of shellfish are packed with zinc. Zinc doesn't get as much attention as many other vitamins and minerals, but our bodies need it so that our immune cells can function as intended. Shellfish that are high in zinc include: oysters, crab, lobster and mussels.