

AN ONLINE NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

# Making Healthy Choices



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## Work Health Programs Benefit Bottom Line

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Health Research Institute, healthcare costs are expected to increase nearly 10% in 2009 for employers. To help control those costs, most employers plan to depend on wellness programs and health plans that personalize member experiences.

Work health promotion programs can positively affect employee health and productivity. A review of 46 studies evaluating the effects of work health promotion programs found that that worksite wellness programs resulted in a 22% reduction in sick leave. In addition, the worksite wellness programs resulted in reduced emotional exhaustion and "burnout," improved overall mental health, and reduced absences.

Worksite health promotion programs can take various forms, such as targeting general lifestyle, health and safety issues, or specific disease predictors (e.g., smoking or high blood pressure). But to be effective, they "should target both physical and psychosocial environments at work," said lead researcher Dr. Jaana Kuoppala.

### Reference:

- Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2008;50:1216-1227.

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## Wellness Programs Targeting Obesity Yield Positive Results

Moderately or extremely obese employees have the highest health-related absenteeism rates of all employee groups. They also have the greatest presenteeism rates, according to productivity study report in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

Researchers measured productivity in a random sample of employees in a manufacturing plant. Many of the employees were overweight but not obese (43%), defined as a BMI of 25-29.9. Another 23% were mildly obese (BMI 30-34.9) and 13% were moderately to extremely obese (BMI 35+). Health-related losses in productivity were 1.8% higher for workers with moderate or extreme obesity. Workplace weight management programs have been shown to produce a significant improvement in productivity and health.

In one year, overweight or obese workers who received coaching and other services to support their efforts to lose weight, improve eating habits, and increase physical activity the participants had reductions in 7 of 10 health risk factors and lost an average of 10 pounds. The return on investment (ROI) model estimated a modest short-term return of \$1.17 for each dollar spent on the obesity management program.

The **WellAssured® Guide to Weight Management** teaches a realistic, systematic, practical, and "take charge" approach to weight management. Readers are introduced to practical strategies for reducing fat and

calories in their diet, increasing physical activity, coping with stress, and creating support systems. An eating-pattern questionnaire is included, as well as logs for keeping track of physical activity, diet, and weight loss. The guide is designed to be used as a post-assessment follow-up program for individual self-study or group classes. For more information, contact your Wellsourc account manager at 503-656-7446.

#### References:

- Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2008;50:981-990.
- Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2008;50:39-45



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#### Iron and Brain Health

Getting adequate iron is essential for good brain development and functioning in early life. New studies suggest that iron deficiency in early life leads to long-lasting neural and behavioral deficits in infants and children.

A recent study looked at mother's iron status (measured by hemoglobin levels) and the risk of schizophrenia disorder in their children. Researchers measured the hemoglobin levels of 6,872 mothers during pregnancy. They found that children from mothers with low hemoglobin levels (less than 10 g/dL) were nearly 4 times as likely to have a schizophrenia disorder, compared to mothers with hemoglobin levels of 12 g/dL or higher.

This study dramatically illustrates the importance of a mother's good nutritional status before and during pregnancy for the health of the unborn child; in this case, getting adequate iron, and the development of the brain and mental health.

A low iron level is common among women of child bearing years, those with heavy blood loss, or a diet low in iron or poor absorption of iron by the body. Endurance athletes, particularly premenopausal, vegetarian, long-distance runners, need to be especially careful to get adequate iron. A hemoglobin test is the best way to determine if you are getting adequate iron in your diet.

Good sources of iron in the diet include whole grains; soybeans; peas and other beans; tofu; fruits such as apricots, dates, and raisins; vegetables such as spinach and broccoli; nuts; black strap molasses; fish, poultry, and lean meat; eggs; and if needed, a supplement with iron.

Foods that improve iron absorption (especially in a vegetarian diet) are those high in vitamin C (e.g., oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes, broccoli, and berries).

Foods that can decrease iron absorption include large amounts of tea or coffee, a very high consumption of high-fiber foods (especially bran), and a high intake of calcium (take a calcium supplement at a different meal than an iron supplement).

The recommended intake of iron for non-vegetarian premenopausal women is 18 mg/day, and for non-vegetarian men and postmenopausal women it is 8 mg/day. Because iron absorption is more difficult on a healthy, high-fiber, vegan diet, 14 mg/day for men and 33 mg/day for premenopausal women are recommended. The upper level of intake should not exceed 45 mg/day.

People who should be careful not to get too much iron (especially from supplements or fortified foods) are mature men and postmenopausal women. Iron deficiency is very rare in these persons. Too much iron can cause other problems including a higher risk for coronary heart disease.

#### References:

- Archives of General Psychiatry. 2008;65:1136-1144.
- McKinley Health Center, University of Illinois. Website accessed Dec. 26, 2008.
- NIH, Office of Dietary Supplements, Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet: Iron. Website accessed Dec. 26, 2008.



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### HPV Vaccine for Preventing Cervical Cancer

Nearly all cervical cancers (over 11,000 cases yearly in the U.S.) are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a vaccination program for young women to help prevent this cancer. A recent report from CDC shows that 1 in 4 adolescent girls (16 million) are now vaccinated for HPV.

The reduction of deaths from cervical cancer is one of medicine's best success stories. The number of deaths were cut about in half when the PAP test (secondary prevention, including screening and early treatment) became widely available. Now, with the availability of a vaccine (primary prevention), the rate of cervical cancer can be dramatically reduced again. The vaccine appears to be very effective, stopping essentially all infections from the two most common strains of HPV. The CDC recommends HPV vaccination for all women younger than age 26 (recommended at age 11-12, before they become sexually active).

The question remaining in many people's minds is its safety. The CDC recently released reports dealing with the safety of this vaccine. In a large surveillance study (ongoing since 2006) including over 375,000 doses of the vaccine, they found "no increased risk of adverse events among female patients who received the vaccine compared with those who did not." This included concerns some had about Guillain-Barre syndrome and other potential problems.

Other preventive measures that have been shown to be effective include not smoking, a faithful monogamous relationship in marriage (most effective), and eating more fruits and vegetables. Fresh fruits and vegetables seem to help the body fight the infection and resolve the infection. One study showed a 54% decrease in risk of persistent HPV infection with a high intake of fruits and vegetables. Eating papaya (at least weekly) was specifically noted to reduce the risk of persistent HIV infection.

#### References:

- Journal of the American Medical Association. 2008;300:2713-2714.
- Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention. 2002;11:876-884.
- American Cancer Society. Website accessed Dec. 26, 2008.



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### Pneumonia Vaccine Recommended for Smokers

All smokers (age 19 and up) should receive the pneumococcal vaccine, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). New findings show that smokers are at increased risk of developing pneumonia. In fact, more than half of all adults who get pneumonia are current or former smokers. Each year, pneumonia claims over 58,000 lives. Many of these could be prevented by getting the pneumonia vaccination.

Smoking makes you more susceptible to pneumococcal infection and dampens the immune response systemically and in the lungs. Researchers also found that the risk of pneumonia decreases when a person stops smoking, cutting the increased risk by 50% after stopping for 5 years, and a return close to nonsmoker's risk after 10 years of stopping.

After studying the risk of the pneumonia vaccine, CDC report that there is no increased risk of serious adverse events associated with the vaccine.

#### References:

- Journal of the American Medical Association. 2008;300:2713.

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## Recipes

French Tarts are a festive dessert for a special occasion.

### ☐ French Tarts

#### Tart Pastry:

1 c	Whole-wheat pastry flour
1 c	All purpose flour
¼ c	Wheat germ
1 tsp	Salt
¼	Oil
¼	Hot water
3 T	Orange juice
1 T	Honey
½ c	Raw cashew butter

Combine the flours, wheat germ and salt. In a separate bowl, mix oil, water, orange juice and honey together. Add the cashew butter and stir together until well blended. Pour into the flour mixture and stir until dough is moist. Knead into a ball. Roll out ball between 2 pieces of wax paper. Remove wax paper and cut dough into circles 1-inch larger than tart tins. Press pastry circles into tart tins and crimp edges. Bake at 350° F, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool.

#### Custard:

2 ½ c	Water
½ c	Cooked rice
⅓ c	Blanched almonds (w/o skins)
⅓	Honey
3 T	Better Than Milk™ soymilk, powder
5 T	Cornstarch
¼ c	Coconut, grated
1 tsp	Vanilla extract
¼ tsp	Salt

In a blender, combine half the water with all remaining ingredients and process until completely smooth. Add remaining water and blend until mixed well. Pour into a saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring constantly until thick. Fill tart tins ¾ full and chill. When chilled, garnish with thinly sliced fresh fruits of choice. Pour Berry Shine Glaze (see recipe below) over fruit.

#### Berry Shine Glaze

⅔ c	Frozen apple juice, concentrate
⅓ c	Strawberries or raspberries
4 tsp	Cornstarch

In a blender, process all ingredients on high for one minute until creamy. Pour into saucepan and cook over medium-high heat stirring constantly until thick and clear. Cool until lukewarm and pour over fresh fruit. Chill before serving.

**Yield:** 24 tarts

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Wellsource, Inc. presents the 1st Annual Wellsource® Wellness Conference



**A wellness conference designed with everyone in mind**

**SAVE THE DATE! September 21-22, 2009**

Whether you are in a corporate or a community wellness setting, this exceptional wellness conference can easily guide you to:

- Create a winning wellness program
- Learn about the newest Wellsource products for absolute best results
- Learn from leading wellness experts
- Earn CEUs
- And improve your personal health!

**Who should attend:** Wellness consultants, healthcare professionals, community outreach leaders, HR managers, and insurance brokers

**Date:** September 21-22, 2009

**Location:** The Hilton Hotel & Executive Tower in beautiful downtown Portland, Oregon

Join us for 2 energy-packed days – complete with national experts in health & wellness, worksite wellness discussion groups, motivating hands-on fitness workshops (for your employees *and* for you), personal demos of all Wellsource products, and feedback forums. (We want to hear from you!)

**Keynote Speaker:** Fitness Expert **ROBERT SWEETGALL** will leave you energized and empowered with his presentation ***Motivation to Move – Fitting 6,000 Footsteps into a Frantic Workday...Just for the Health of It!***

**Sample Session Topics:**

Worksite Wellness on a Super-tight Budget  
 Get Moving and Stay Motivated with a Virtual Travel Adventure  
 The 5 Best Activities for Reducing Stress, Weight, and Heart Disease Risk  
 ...and *more!*

**Between sessions, you can participate in wellness activities**, including T'ai Chi, relaxation techniques, and a daily one-mile walk. *Dress appropriately!*

**Other features:**

Early morning walking clinic – with Robert Sweetgall

Dinner Cruise aboard the Portland Spirit

Day-hike through the Columbia River Gorge (the day before the conference)

***Please save the date! More conference information to come.***

**Or contact us at: [well@wellsourcing.com](mailto:well@wellsourcing.com)**

***About Robert Sweetgall:***

Robert Sweetgall is America's leading advocate of walking for wellness, and the only person to have walked through all 50 states (11,208 miles) in 365 consecutive days. Author of 17 books on walking, wellness, and active living, Sweetgall has been interviewed on hundreds of radio and TV talk shows including NBC Today, Evening Magazine, Regis & Kathy Live, and NPR. To learn more, visit his website at: [www.creativewalking.com](http://www.creativewalking.com)

**About Making Healthy Choices™**

The Making Healthy Choices™ newsletter is written by Don Hall, DrPH, CHES, founder and CEO of Wellsourcing, Inc. with contribution from associated health professionals. It is available as a resource to Wellsourcing clients and other select organizations involved in promoting health.

Selected content is general health information from evidence-based research. Its purpose is not to treat disease but to promote healthy lifestyles. Persons with health problems should consult their physician for specific guidance.

