

Preventing *Illness and Injury*

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Most of us have probably experienced a setback in our life, whether it was an injury or illness. It can really interfere with our daily routine and disrupt what we want to do, adding stress into our lives. Here are some tips to avoid unwanted illnesses or injuries:

GET RESTFUL SLEEP

Sleep is often underrated. One of the most important things you can do for your health is to attain restful, quality sleep. If you don't feel rested 30 minutes after waking up, chances are you are not getting enough quality sleep. When you are tired, you tend to have low energy and can be irritable. Your body also craves high fat and sugary foods/drinks, which can lead to illness. When you are tired, you are less likely to exercise, which can affect sleep quality and stress levels. Your risk of injuring yourself is higher when you're tired; car accidents, poor balance (and falling), and impaired concentration are often products of poor sleep. According to an article by Mary Desaulniers in *Health Guidance*, "Research shows that the sleeping periods of drivers who are involved in road accidents are shorter than the ones of those who had sufficient sleep. Sleepiness is very much like being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. When you are sleepy, your mental and psychomotor skills diminish." You can improve your sleep by:

- Adding exercise into your daily routine
- Avoiding caffeine and sugar after the morning
- Taking time to wind down an hour before bedtime (turning off any loud TV/music, taking a warm bath, turning off lights, sleeping in a dark, cool, comfortable bedroom with no distractions)
- Getting 8 hours of sleep



MANAGE/REDUCE STRESS

Stressors (the events we perceive as stressful) will always be there; often we don't even have control over them. Losing a job, a challenging coworker or family member, moving, and getting married are all examples of stressors. What's important here is *how* we perceive the stressor, not the stressor itself. For example, you can perceive losing a job as a very negative event or see it as an opportunity to do something new and different. Stress can deplete your immune system, making you more prone to getting sick. Chronic stress can lead to diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, heart disease, anxiety, and depression. You can reduce stress by:

- Changing the way you think about something/someone
- Engaging in physical activity on a regular basis
- Making 'me' time to do something you enjoy
- Meditating
- Getting restful sleep
- Eating healthy foods

GET MODERATE AMOUNTS OF EXERCISE

When you exercise, your body releases endorphins ("good mood" chemicals) in your brain and stomach. Endorphins are your body's natural painkillers, and also enhance your mood. Exercise actually helps alleviate, prevent, or stabilize many diseases, including anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, elevated blood sugars, high cholesterol, arthritis, cancer, insomnia, and constipation. Certain types of exercise that focus on your balance can prevent falls, and thus avoid injuries. Exercise that is moderate and performed with proper form can also prevent injury. **h&h**

Cindy Goulding is a licensed mental health therapist, a nationally certified personal trainer, and a certified health and wellness coach. She has over 25 years of experience working with clients in a variety of settings, including corporate settings, wellness clinics, and fitness centers. She is currently a Carolina Partners Wellness Center Affiliate and facilitates workshops and webinars for large companies, and provides coaching for stress/resiliency, weight management, depression, tobacco cessation, and lifestyle skills. Her book Healthy Weight: It's a Family Affair offers easy and effective exercises and tips to overcome challenges such as stress, work/life balance, sleep, and emotional eating. It can be purchased from our on-line store at www.goldensealwellness.com.

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