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**APRIL 2020** Health & Wellbeing Newsletter



## Mental Health at work

**We spend a large proportion of our time at work, so it is vital that this time does not negatively affect our physical or mental health.**

**Recognition of the importance of looking after our mental health is thankfully growing, and this is also true in the workplace.**

Work politics, workload, commuting time, our colleagues and expectations are just some of the factors that can lead to stress, anxiety and possibly even time away from the workplace.

To help with these and other issues a lot of employers enlist the help of specific service providers to assist with signposting individuals to relevant places of information or help. These may be in the form of an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), onsite visits by healthcare professionals or through the company's occupational health or human resources departments. A growing area is the training of existing staff as mental health first aiders. Just like the physical first aiders we all know, these employees can be the initial help that someone needs to prevent the situation getting worse.

**See over page for some top tips for maintaining good mental health.**



**Save the date –  
Mental Health  
Awareness week**

# 10 tips for good mental health

## 1. Make sure you get enough sleep

Getting enough zzz's at night is critical for healthy cognitive function. Sleep helps us to regulate the chemicals in our brain that transmit information. These chemicals are important for managing our moods and emotions and if we don't get enough sleep, we can start to feel depressed and anxious. It's recommended that adults aged between 18-65 years old get between 7-9 hours of sleep each night.

## 2. Maintain a healthy, balanced diet

Food isn't just important for our bodies, but also for our minds. Mineral deficiencies, such as iron and vitamin B12 deficiencies, can leave us suffering from low moods. If you find that you're a particularly stressed or anxious person, you should try limiting or cutting out caffeine as this can make you feel jittery and anxious.

## 3. Limit alcohol consumption

When you've had a few drinks, you can feel more depressed and anxious the next day, and it can be harder to concentrate. Excessive drinking for prolonged periods can leave you with a thiamine deficiency. Thiamine is important for our brain function and a deficiency can lead to severe memory problems, motor (coordination) problems, confusion and eye problems.

## 4. Quit smoking

Research into smoking and stress has shown that instead of helping people to relax, smoking actually increases anxiety and tension. Nicotine creates an immediate sense of relaxation so people smoke in the belief that it reduces stress and anxiety. This feeling of relaxation is temporary and soon gives way to withdrawal symptoms and increased cravings.

## 5. Soak up the sun

Sunlight is a great source of vitamin D. Vitamin D is really important for our health. It helps our brains to release chemicals which improve our mood, like endorphins and serotonin. Try to go out in the sun when you can, but make sure you keep your skin and eyes safe. 30 minutes to 2 hours a day of sunlight is ideal. During the winter some people become depressed because they aren't getting enough sunlight - this is known as [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#). Some people find using a special light-therapy lamp helps to alleviate the symptoms.

## 6. Have a plan for managing stress

Stress is often unavoidable but knowing what triggers your stress and knowing how to cope is key in maintaining good mental health. Try to avoid burying your head in the sand, and tackle problems face on. Aim to manage your responsibilities and worries by making a list and also consider when or how you can resolve each issue. Often if you break down your worries and stresses and write them down, you realise that they are manageable.

## 7. Get active

Activity and exercise are essential in maintaining good mental health. Being active not only gives you a sense of achievement, but it boosts the chemicals in your brain that help put you in a good mood. Exercising can help eliminate low mood, anxiety, stress and feeling tired and lazy. It is also linked to [living a longer life](#).

## 8. Make time for your hobbies

Try to make time for doing the fun things you enjoy. If you like going for a walk, painting or a specific TV show, try to set aside time to enjoy yourself. If we don't spend any time doing things we enjoy, we can become irritable and unhappy.

## 9. Stay sociable

Make an effort to maintain good relationships and talk to people whenever you get the chance. Having friends is important not just for your self-esteem, but also for providing support when you're not feeling too great. Research has found that talking to others for just ten minutes can improve brain function!

## 10. It's okay to ask for help

One of the most important ways to keep yourself mentally healthy is to recognise when you're not feeling good, and to know when to ask for help. There's no shame in asking someone for support if you're feeling low or stressed. Everyone goes through patches where they don't feel as good as they should. You can try speaking to your friends or family, or if you think your mental health is getting on top of you then you can [speak to your GP](#).