



### INTRODUCTION

Working a fulltime job often makes it difficult to practice healthy habits like eating nutritional meals and exercising regularly. It is hard to eat healthy meals when traveling frequently between multiple facilities. In addition, working in the office usually means a more sedentary work day because the jobs often require workers to sit at a computer for most of the day. Situations like these can lead to increased cardiovascular risk factors. It is important to focus on health and fitness in order to increase awareness of potential health risks and promote steps to reduce these risks. This Toolbox Talk discusses tips to increase overall levels of health and gives information pertaining to changing health habits. Before altering diets or physical activity levels, it may be necessary to consult a physician; especially if there is a pre-existing condition.



### Heart disease and stress management

Spending a large portion of time traveling in a constricted area such as a car or plane or spending a lot of time sitting at a desk can lead to an increased chance of heart disease. Other risk factors that may contribute to heart disease are given in the list below.

- Smoking – smokers are twice as likely to have a heart attack; smoking increases blood pressure and heart rate, as well as narrowing of blood vessels
- High blood pressure – high blood pressure causes a person's heart to work harder; over time the heart enlarges and gets weaker, putting stress on the heart
- Obesity – people more than 20 percent over their ideal body weight are at an increased risk for heart attack because of the increased workload on the heart
- Sedentary lifestyle – a lack of exercise can increase cholesterol levels and usually leads to weight gain
- Stress – anxiety and tension can trigger angina and other heart problems in some people
- Diabetes – diabetes affects the amount of cholesterol in the body; studies have shown that heart disease is the cause of death in over 80 percent of diabetics

To help reduce the risk of heart disease, individuals should maintain a healthy diet, exercise regularly and manage stress effectively. Some tips to eating healthy and exercise are provided later in this document. As stress can affect a person's health, listed below are a few tips to help reduce stress.

- When feeling overwhelmed, take a few deep breaths or go for a walk
- Take some time to do things you enjoy such as reading or gardening
- Take a few minutes each day for quiet reflection



- Manage your time; make a schedule and stick to it
- Exercise regularly
- Eat well-balanced meals

### Eating properly

A leading cause of poor health is eating habits. Eating unhealthy foods can affect an individual's level of energy, ability to sleep and ability to concentrate, as well as a variety of other health factors. Eating habits are one of the key factors that affect weight and overall body fat percentage. Listed below are some tips to healthy eating.

- Take the time to chew food properly; this aids in digestion as well as reducing the chance of overeating
- Avoid eating while under extreme stress; stress can affect the body's ability to digest food properly
- It may be beneficial to eat six small meals rather than three large meals; this may boost your metabolism and energy level
- Reduce your intake of foods high in sodium and refined sugars, such as candy bars, potato chips and sugary sodas
- Consume 45 percent to 65 percent of daily calories from carbohydrates and 10 percent to 35 percent of daily calories from proteins
- Try to limit the intake of fat per day to 10 percent of the total daily calories, with the majority coming from unsaturated fat
- Caloric intake should be balanced to match the amount of physical activity engaged in per day
- Incorporate 14 grams of fiber for each 1,000 calories consumed each day
- Do not consume more than 300 milligrams of cholesterol a day
- Try to avoid eating out more than one to two days per week; be aware that nutritional information of restaurant foods may not be available or accurate
- When working in the field, pack your own meals; if this is not possible, stick to healthier choices when eating out
- Incorporate at least eight glasses of water per day into your diet; a glass constitutes eight ounces
- Plan your meals each day based on the six basic foods groups given here:
  - Protein (fish, meat, eggs, nuts and beans) – try to avoid red meats
  - Vegetables – strive for vegetables with deeper greens and brighter oranges, they usually have more vitamins
  - Fruits – include a variety of fresh and dried fruit; canned fruit usually contains added sugar
  - Whole grains – like whole wheat, brown rice and oatmeal
  - Dairy – try to incorporate low fat or fat-free products; organic products are usually the healthier option
  - Oils – try to obtain fats from nuts, seeds and vegetable oils (e.g. virgin olive oil)



### Exercise

- Incorporating a healthy amount of physical activity into your daily routine can contribute greatly to your health. Daily exercise improves muscle tone, increases circulation and strengthens the cardiovascular system. Listed below are some helpful tips regarding healthy exercise techniques and habits.
- Physical activity programs should be started gradually with conditioning exercises and moderate workouts; progression should occur as the individual's strength increases
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes per day keeping the heart rate elevated; if beginning a new exercise regime, it may be advisable to start with 15 minutes per day
- Aerobic exercise, which typically increases the heart rate, is important for heart health
- It is important to incorporate exercises that maintain flexibility and balance especially as we get older
- A few activities that everyone can enjoy or benefit from are listed here: walking, cycling, jogging or skating; take the stairs instead of the elevator; enjoying outdoor play with kids or pets; completing home repair or maintenance activities; parking at the back of the lot for extra walking time; performing simple exercises such as push-ups and sit-ups while watching TV; most importantly taking part in physical activities which are also enjoyable
- When exercising, if you feel any of the following symptoms stop immediately; it may be necessary to consult a physician: light-headedness, dizziness, chest tightness, pain/discomfort or shortness of breath

### Discussion

- Remember healthy habits can improve a person's quality of life but it is also important to be safe and cautious when beginning new routines