



wellness & safety

Schools Insurance Authority



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Understanding stress overload and finding ways to fight it

In ancient times, our stress response – fight or flight – likely developed to help us react quickly to danger, such as a charging saber-toothed tiger. Today, it can be triggered by any number of situations, such as a tight deadline or traffic jam.

Stress in small doses can actually be a positive thing – it can help us perform well during job interviews or music recitals, for example. But too much stress isn't good for us. Chronic stress can put us at risk for health problems, such as heart disease, obesity, depression and anxiety. Chronic stress can also make a health condition worse.

Stress shows up in different ways. Some people feel moody or tired. Others sleep too much or too little, or eat too much or too little. Stress can even trigger headaches, stomachaches or nausea.

We can't make stress go away, but we can reduce it. Here are some ways:

- **Adopt healthy habits.** Make exercise a part of your routine. For example, take a hike, as research suggests that walking in nature, instead of in an urban setting, is good for your mental health. Eating right, getting enough sleep and using relaxation techniques, such as yoga or meditation, can also reduce stress.
- **Take a break.** Tune in to your body to know when you really need a break, whether it's just a walk or a full week on a sunny beach. While on vacation, unplug from your devices to fully recharge. If that's tough to do, schedule a limited block of time to check them.



- **Know what you can and can't control.** Family members fall ill, work gets crazy and extra guests show up for dinner. Focus your energy on what's within your control and try to let the rest go.
- **Tap into humor.** When we feel stressed, a good belly laugh can lift our mood. Laughter can lower cortisol, the body's stress hormone, and boost endorphins, the body's "feel-good" chemicals. Watch a funny movie, read a humorous book, or laugh with friends and family.

- **Shift your focus.** On a daily basis, jot down what you're grateful for. This can help shift your focus from your worries to all the things that are going well in your life.
- **Make time for your passion.** Do you tend to lose track of time when you do a certain activity? Carve out time for it on a regular basis. If it involves creating something, don't focus too much on the end result. Just enjoy the process.
- **Manage your time wisely.** Hone your time-management skills. For example, make a list of everything you want to finish that day and rank tasks in order of importance. If you have a big project on your plate, break it into smaller tasks. Instead of trying to juggle multiple things at once, focus on one thing at a time. Learn to delegate tasks, minimize interruptions and say no.

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The SIA staff wishes you and your family peace, good health and joy this holiday season and throughout 2018.



• Holidays can prompt key discussion time about family health history

The holidays are good times to talk about family health history

By Lyn Poll, M.S.

There's Mother's Day, Father's Day and even Grandparents' Day. What do these days have in common? The people celebrated on these days can help you take an important step in having a longer and healthier future together.

In 2004, the U.S. Surgeon General declared Thanksgiving as National Family Health History Day. Over the holidays or at other times when families gather, Americans are encouraged to talk about and write down the health problems that may run in their families.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), 96 percent of Americans know that family history is important. Yet, only 30 percent have ever tried to gather and write down their families' health histories.

Why is family health history important?

Besides the basic traits of hair and eye colors common to families, other traits can be passed down from parents to children. Some common conditions that can be inherited are:

- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- heart disease
- stroke
- arthritis
- some cancers

You cannot change your genes, but you can take important steps to help reduce your risk of developing the diseases that affect relatives. Lifestyle changes, such as exercising regularly, eating a healthier



diet, quitting smoking and getting routine physicals, can help you take action to keep you and your family healthy.

Where do I start the health conversation?

Beginning a health conversation might be difficult, but if you can put the uneasiness aside, the outcome can be eye-opening and perhaps even life-saving. Be sure to ask questions about the health history of your closest family members, the ones related to you by blood, as they influence your health the most. These would include you:

- parents
- children
- grandparents
- brothers and sisters
- aunts and uncles

Creating your family health portrait

The surgeon general has created a computerized tool to help make it easy and fun to build a portrait of your family's health. This web-enabled program will help you organize your family's health history so that you can print it out for presentation to a family doctor. It also allows users to save their histories to their own computers and share them with other family members. You can access the "My Family Health Portrait" tool at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>.

Knowing your family history is important both for genealogy and health reasons. So this holiday season start a new tradition and have a conversation about your family's health background. What you learn might surprise you.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Understanding stress and how to manage it

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- **Talk to someone.** Talking with friends and family is a great way to lower stress. Talking can help you release pent-up feelings. Your confidant can give you support or even suggest new ways of looking at a problem. You can also reach out to a professional for guidance.

- **Cuddle with a pet.** Research shows that spending time with a pet can boost your mood.



- **Create a calm home.** After a hectic day at work, your home can be a sanctuary. Start by de-cluttering your home. To decorate, choose soft lighting, soothing colors (think blue, green or neutral hues) and bring in natural elements, such as plants and wood. Turn off the TV and turn on a soothing soundtrack, such as the sound of ocean waves or a mountain stream.

Stress is part of life and as much as we may want to, we can't avoid it. However, the ideas above can help us keep it under control so we can live happier, healthier lives.

Do you need help? If your district is part of SIA's EAP, you can contact MHN at 1-800-227-1060 or visit them at members.mhn.com.

Source: MHN

Hepatitis A prevention can be a real lifesaver

A recent outbreak of Hepatitis A in California has raised interest and concern. The majority of those affected are in the San Diego area, as well as in Los Angeles and Santa Cruz counties, and many are homeless and/or illicit drug users. Although Sacramento and surrounding counties have not yet been included in this outbreak, it's important to understand Hepatitis A and practice some prevention tips.



What are the symptoms?

The Hepatitis A virus doesn't always cause symptoms; some people get the virus and have no symptoms of the disease. Symptoms include fever, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, yellowing of the eyes (jaundice), stomach pain, vomiting, dark urine, pale stools and diarrhea. Adults are more likely to have symptoms than are children.

How can the Hepatitis A virus be prevented?

- **Get two shots of the Hepatitis A virus vaccine.** The vaccine may be given as a twin vaccine against both Hepatitis A and B.
- **Don't have sex with someone** who has the Hepatitis A virus infection.
- **Use your own towels, toothbrushes** and eating utensils.
- **Don't share food, drinks or cigarettes** with other people.

For more information on Hepatitis A, follow these links below:

California Department of Public Health
<https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Documents/FoodborneHepatitisAFactSheet.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/pdfs/hepageneralfactsheet_bw.pdf

Source: California Department of Public Health

What is Hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). The virus is highly contagious and can cause liver disease. Hepatitis A-related illness can last a few weeks or months, but in some cases it can be fatal.

How is it transmitted?

The Hepatitis A virus is usually transmitted by:

- **touching objects or** eating food that someone who is infected has handled.
- **having sex with someone who** is infected with HAV.

Campus protection during the holidays starts with an incident-prevention checklist

Campuses are especially vulnerable during the holidays and many losses during this period can be prevented if proper precautions are taken. Please do the following to help protect your school:

- **Ensure that all doors are properly locked** and that all locks are secure.
- **Check all windows and other points of entry for damage.** Ensure they close securely.
- **Remove all personal valuables** from the campus during the holiday break.
- **Keep window coverings closed** to hide room contents.
- **Store high-value equipment (computers, TVs, etc.)** in secure rooms, preferably without windows.
- **Publicize the WeTip program to your school families and neighbors.** SIA has free wallet cards and magnets to promote the WeTip anonymous crime-reporting hotline. Contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org.
- **Report any damaged pipes, faucets or leaks** to the custodian or maintenance department.



Sign up for WeTip

For information and materials, contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org.



- Stay road-ready for winter driving
- Green tea is good for teeth

Winter driving requires extra care

Winter weather presents additional driving hazards, whether you're driving for your district or driving on your personal time. It's important to take precautions to keep yourself safe on the road. Here are some pointers:

Keep your vehicle road-ready

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggests you routinely do the following for your vehicle:

- Check your battery.
- Check your cooling system.
- Fill your windshield washer reservoir.
- Check windshield wipers and defrosters.
- Check floor mat installation to prevent pedal interference.
- Inspect your tires and check the age of your tires.
- Keep a full tank of gas.

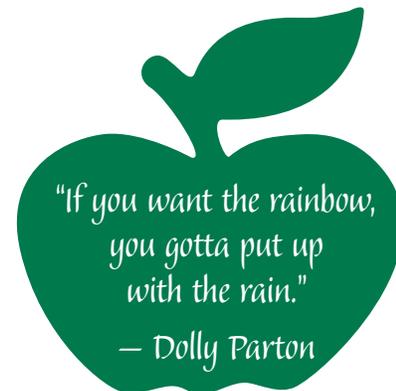
Take care while driving

- Give yourself enough time to arrive at your destination. Trips can take longer during winter than at other times of the year, especially if you encounter storm conditions or icy roads.
- Make sure your cell phone is charged in the event you get stuck along the road, but avoid the temptation to use the phone while driving.
- Adjust your speed to the road's conditions.
- Leave more distance than usual between your vehicle and the one just ahead of you, giving yourself at least 10 seconds to come to a complete stop.
- Be careful when driving over bridges, as well as on roadways rarely exposed to sunlight – they're often icy when other areas aren't.
- Don't activate your cruise control when driving on slippery surfaces.
- Monitor weather conditions at your destination before beginning your trip. If conditions look as though they're going to be too hazardous, just stay home.
- Look out for yourself. Assume other drivers aren't concerned with your safety – you're responsible for protecting yourself and your passengers.

Green tea can improve teeth, gums and breath

Looking for a caffeine boost? Consider swapping out your daily coffee for a cup of green tea. Regularly drinking green tea can protect against cavities, gum disease and bad breath, according to a 2016 study. The study indicated that green tea may reduce harmful oral bacteria. The brewed drink also may lower your chance of developing oral cancer.

Source: Delta Dental of California



The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).

Keep a copy of this newsletter in your IIPP binder and be sure all employees receive a copy.

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