

MANAGED CARE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

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April is Autism Awareness Month

Autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life and affects a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. Autism is defined by a certain set of behaviors and is a "spectrum disorder" that affects individuals differently and to varying degrees. There is no known single cause for autism, but increased awareness and funding can help families today.

In February 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued their ADDME autism prevalence report. The report, which looked at a sample of 8 year olds in 2000 and 2002, concluded that the prevalence of autism had risen to 1 in every 150 American children, and almost 1 in 94 boys. The issuance of this report caused a media uproar, but the news was not a surprise to ASA or to the 1.5 million Americans living with the effects of autism spectrum disorder. Nonetheless, the spotlight shown on autism as a result of the prevalence increase opens opportunities for the nation to consider how to serve these families facing a lifetime of supports for their children. Currently, ASA estimates that the lifetime cost of caring for a child with autism ranges from \$3.5 million to \$5 million, and that the United States is facing almost \$90 billion annually in costs for autism (this figure includes research, insurance costs and non-covered expenses, Medicaid waivers for autism, educational spending, housing, transportation, employment, in addition to related therapeutic services and caregiver costs).

Know the Signs: Early Identification Can Change Lives

Autism is treatable. Children do not "outgrow" autism, but studies show that early diagnosis and intervention lead to significantly improved outcomes.

Here are some signs to look for in the children in your life:

- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Repetitive use of language and/or motor mannerisms (e.g., hand-flapping, twirling objects)
- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of interest in peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous or make-believe play

- taken from Autism Society of America

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Upcoming Wellness Events Around Managed Care

- Weight Loss Wednesday Support Group - 7:30-8:00 a.m.
Located in the West Kitchen
- Wellness Lunch and Learn – Wednesday, April 9 12:00-1:00
Featured Speaker will be Jamie Starkey from Center for Integrated Medicine. All West Creek employees are welcome.
Please RSVP.
- Wellness Grand Rounds – Wednesday, April 9. All West Creek employees are welcome.
- Employee Forum – Monday, April 28 2:00-4:00
- 4th Annual CC Nursing Fun Run – Saturday, May 3; registration begins at 7:30, race starts at 9:00 a.m. see website <http://www.cchs.net/wellness/documents/08-NUR-010FunRunFlyer.pdf>
- Continue to check out the Managed Care Wellness Website for photos of you and your friends!
<http://www.cchs.net/wellness/managedcare.asp>

Managed Care Wellness meets regularly to discuss and plan multiple events for our employees. We have some exciting ideas planned for 2008 in addition to our monthly lunches. Your feedback and ideas are always welcome.

Free Your Back from Pain

Women and men suffer from about the same amount of back pain, but while men most often get long-lasting back pain from lifting too much, women often ache from sitting too much. "The second highest back pain is reported by sedentary workers, most of whom are women who sit at desks -- often in front of computers all day," says Sheila Reid, PT, coordinator of rehabilitation services at The Spine Institute of New England in Williston, Vermont.



Most commonly, people suffer from lower-back pain, which is generally caused by straining or spraining muscles and tissues that connect bones and cartilage. A sudden action in which you use muscles that is tired or out of condition is particularly likely to cause sudden pain.

Women have two-thirds the muscle mass of men who are otherwise the same size as they are, says Rose Hayes, PhD, an ergonomist (specializing in the study of technology design and people's needs) for the United States Postal Service. "They need more muscle power to do the same work." While most women would think carefully before lifting a 50-pound weight in a gym, they think nothing of picking up a toddler and a 10-pound bag of groceries while still carrying a briefcase crammed with books and papers, says Dr. Hayes. And that can cause back-muscle strain.

The thirties and forties are the years when arthritis and other types of natural degeneration in the small joints of the back begin to catch up with us, says Robert Waldrip, MD, an orthopedic spine surgeon in private practice in Phoenix.

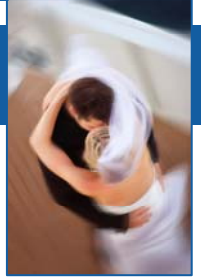
In other cases, the problem is a herniated disk. Disks are small pads made of a tough, elastic outer covering (called the annulus) and a soft center. The disks act like shock absorbers between the vertebrae. Over time, a disk can herniate, meaning that the annulus has torn and the soft center has extended out to press against a nerve root, causing horrible pain. Poor posture also increases strain on the back and can aggravate arthritis and lead to disk problems.

Take some preventative measures

- **Lift first, turn second.** It seems natural: You grab a bag of groceries and turn to load them into the car in one quick movement. Don't do it, says Dr. Hayes. Over time, twisting can lead to herniated disks. Instead, lift your load; hold it close to your abdomen, and then turn, using your feet to get you where you want to go instead of swiveling your hips.
- **Wheel your belongings.** Briefcases are heavy. So are big purses slung on shoulder straps? Just carry the minimum in a purse. For the rest of your belongings, try switching to a backpack, or cart your belongings in a suitcase on wheels.
- **Move around.** Every half hour, move around to keep your muscles and spine from stiffening
- **Get an exercise prescription.** Exercise is the key to supporting your back. Any aerobic exercise that you can do as often as is comfortable can help your back.
- **Treatment when necessary.** If your doctor has confirmed that what you're experiencing is from muscle spasms or chronic lower-back ache, and not a herniated disk, you'll be relieved to hear that there's plenty you can do.
- **Rest for a day or two, but no more.** Too much rest; however, can do more harm than good, say back care experts.
- **Turn on the heat.** To soothe the ache, apply a hot water bottle or heating pad to the site of the pain.
- **Go OTC.** Any over-the-counter pain reliever containing aspirin, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, or ketoprofen can ease back pain.
- **Try gentle stretches.** While lying down, try bringing up your knees to your chest, suggests Reid. Then put a little pressure on your knees. Stretch, and then relax. Repeat a few times unless you feel pain. If you do, stop.

-Prevention Magazine

Happy Marriage, Happy Heart



Happily married people have lower blood pressure than unhappy married people or singles, a Brigham Young University study says.

On the other hand, even having a supportive social network did not translate into a blood pressure benefit for singles or unhappy married people, according to the study.

"There seem to be some unique health benefits from marriage. It's not just being married that benefits health -- what's really the most protective of health is having a happy marriage," study author Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a psychologist who specializes in relationships and health, said in a prepared statement.

The study included 204 married and 99 single adults who wore portable blood-pressure monitors for 24 hours. The monitors recorded blood pressure at random intervals and provided a total of about 72 readings.

"We wanted to capture participants' blood pressure doing whatever they normally do in everyday life. Getting one or two readings in a clinic is not really representative of the fluctuations that occur throughout the day," Holt-Lunstad said.

Overall, happily married people scored four points lower on the blood pressure readings than single adults. The study also found that blood pressure among married people -- especially those in happy marriages -- dipped more during sleep than in single people.

"Research has shown that people whose blood pressure remains high throughout the night are at much greater risk of cardiovascular problems than people whose blood pressure dips," Holt-Lunstad said.

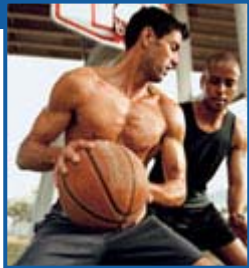
The study was published in the March 20 issue of the journal *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*.

The study also found that unhappily married adults have higher blood pressure than both happily married and single adults.

Holt-Lunstad noted that spouses can encourage healthy habits in one another, such as eating a healthy diet and having regular doctor visits. People in happy marriages also have a source of emotional support, she said.

SOURCE: Brigham Young University, news release, March 20, 2008

Men's Corner



Call the Shots

Boost your full-court fitness level and skills with these tactics from Mike Nilson, Gonzaga University's strength and conditioning coach.

1. Run, Stop, Pop - The Drill: Breakaway jumper

Nothing mutes an opponent quicker than a fast-break bomb. To hone this weapon, start from the top of the key and dribble down court. Once you're inside the arc, pull back for a jump shot. Immediately rebound your shot and repeat the drill in the opposite direction. Do 10 reps.

2. Precise Passing - The Drill: Sideline shuffle

Mark three chest-high spots along the gym wall with sticky notes. For 60 seconds, try to hit the marks with chest, overhead, one-handed, and bounce passes while shuffling sideways up and down the sideline. Repeat 3 times and increase your speed for each interval.

3. Crash the Boards - The Drill: Rebound hops

Stand under the backboard. Jump up and throw the basketball at a spot on the glass and catch it before you land. Drop into a squat and touch the ball to the ground, and then jump up again for another rep. Repeat 10 times. Focus on soft landings — they save your joints and help you explode up.

4. Game Winner - The Drill: Wing-to-wing threes

Practicing your shooting while you're fresh won't help you at the buzzer. Take a shot from the left wing, run to rebound your shot, and continue sprinting to the right wing. At the sideline, shoot another 3, and repeat. Shoot until you make 6 baskets. Needing that final swish simulates pressure shooting.

Provided by Men's Health



SUPER FOOD OF THE MONTH: BELL PEPPERS

A wonderful combination of tangy taste and crunchy texture, bell peppers are the Christmas ornaments of the vegetable world with their beautifully shaped glossy exterior that comes in a wide array of vivid colors ranging from green, red, yellow, orange, purple, brown to black. Although peppers are available throughout the year, they are most abundant and tasty during the months of August and September.

Bell peppers are excellent sources of vitamin C and vitamin A (through its concentration of carotenoids such as beta-carotene), two very powerful antioxidants. These antioxidants work together to effectively neutralize free radicals, which can travel through the body causing huge amounts of damage to cells. Free radicals are major players in the build up of cholesterol in the arteries that leads to atherosclerosis and heart disease, the nerve and blood vessel damage seen in diabetes, the cloudy lenses of cataracts, the joint pain and damage seen in osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and the wheezing and airway tightening of asthma. By providing these two potent free radical destroyers, bell peppers may help prevent or reduce some of the symptoms of these conditions by shutting down the source of the problem.

Bell peppers can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, promote optimal health, promote lung health, and protect against rheumatoid arthritis.

How to select and store:

Choose peppers that have deep vivid colors, taut skin, and that are free of soft spots, blemishes and darkened areas. Their stems should be green and fresh looking. Peppers should be heavy for their size and firm enough so that they will gently yield to slight pressure.

Tips for Preparing Bell Peppers:

Before coring and/or cutting the pepper, wash it under running water. If the pepper has been waxed, you should also scrub it well.

A Few Quick Serving Ideas:

Add finely chopped bell peppers to tuna or chicken salad.

Steam cored peppers for five minutes, stuff them with your favorite rice salad or grain pilaf, and bake in a 350°F oven until they are hot.

Healthy sauté chopped peppers, celery and onions then combine with tofu, chicken or seafood to make a simple Louisiana Creole dish.

Kid's Corner



Preventing Little Elbow Injuries

How to recognize a common injury

If you ever lift your child by one arm over a curb or onto a step, or swing him around in play, think twice: You could dislocate one of his elbow bones -- an injury known as nursemaid's elbow that's common in toddlers and preschoolers. It's usually painless, but that means it can be hard to tell if your child is hurt. Kids may not cry, and the littlest ones won't be able to tell you something's out of whack.

A sure sign something's wrong: Your child stops using his arm or refuses to bend his elbow, says Alvin Crawford, M.D., a spokesperson for the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. If that happens, call your doctor or take your child to the ER so the elbow can be popped back into place. The fix is only slightly painful, and he'll feel better right away. The best way to keep little joints where they belong: Lift your child from his armpits or torso instead of his arm.

– *Parents Magazine*

Soccer Is Here To Stay

The United States Youth Soccer Association has three million members and another 600,000 are registered with the American Youth Soccer Association, and those numbers are growing. In small towns and big cities, more unusual is the child who isn't on a soccer team. And last year's Women's World Cup, complete with superstars, role models, and nail-biting last minute wins, only boosted the sport's popularity.

That popularity may also be because soccer is just plain good for kids. Soccer is a sport where biggest and strongest isn't always best. Though big players can certainly succeed, smaller, petite players can as well, if they are faster and more agile than larger players. And soccer teaches teamwork: The best player is the one who knows instinctively to give up the ball to another player with a better chance of scoring, and who understands that the act of giving up the ball is a play unto itself. It's all in the form of fun and games.

It's important for us parents from the presoccer generation to learn and learn fast. Our kids are going to be heading and bunting and blocking whether we understand it or not. Isn't it more fun to go along for the ride knowing what you're looking at?

The Laws of Soccer

In soccer, the rules are known as the laws. The object of the game, of course, is to get the ball into the opponent's goal without using your hands or arms.

Play stops if the ball goes out of bounds. If it goes out on the sidelines, a throw in is required. If the attacking team sends the ball over the end line, the defensive team gets a goal kick. The defensive goalkeeper places the ball in the goal box, and he or another player on his team kicks the ball up field. If a defensive player kicks the ball across that same end line, the attacking team is awarded a corner kick. The attacking player hopes to kick the ball high and set up a teammate for a possible goal.

The penalty that is most often called and that is the most confusing, especially for nonplaying parents, is offside. The simplest way to explain the rule is that when the ball is not between an attacking player and the goal, there must be at least two defensive players between the attacking player and the opponent's end line when the attacking player is in the opponent's half of the field. Other common penalties include charging from behind, "handing" the ball (touching it with hands or arms), holding, kicking, tripping, pushing, hitting, or charging an opponent, and kicking the ball while it's held by the goalkeeper.

– *Parenting.com*



Weight Watchers Recipe of the Month

Ginormous Oven-Baked Omelet

PER SERVING (1 huge piece, 1/4th of dish): 140 calories, 3g fat, 387mg sodium, 9g carbs, 1g fiber, 5g sugars, 18g protein -- **POINTS®** value 3*

Ingredients:

2 cups fat-free liquid egg substitute (like Egg Beaters)
 1/2 cup fat-free milk
 1/2 cup reduced-fat shredded cheese (any flavor)
 1 cup sliced bell peppers (any color)
 1 cup sliced mushrooms
 1/2 cup sliced tomatoes
 1/2 cup sliced onions
 1 tbs. reduced-fat parmesan-style grated topping
 3/4 tsp. garlic powder
 1/8 tsp. black pepper
 Optional toppings: ketchup, salsa, hot sauce



Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Into a deep, round casserole dish (about 9 inches wide) sprayed with nonstick spray, pour egg substitute and milk. Add shredded cheese, tomatoes, garlic powder, and black pepper. Mix well, and then set aside.

Bring a large pan sprayed with nonstick spray (butter-flavored spray if you have it) to high heat. Stirring occasionally, cook peppers, onions, and mushrooms for 2 minutes (just long enough to brown the outsides). Add veggies to the casserole dish, and mix well.

Place dish in the oven and cook for 30 minutes. Next, carefully remove the dish from the oven and evenly cover with parm-style topping. Return it to the oven, and cook for 20 - 25 minutes longer (until the top has puffed and is firm). Allow to cool slightly before cutting. Then, if you like, finish off with the optional ingredients (or any of your fave omelet toppers!).

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

-hungrygirl.com



*He who takes medicine and neglects to diet wastes the skill of his doctors.
 ~Chinese Proverb*

Fitness News Flash:

Swim Your Way to Stronger Bones

To strengthen bones, we've always heard that weight-bearing and high-impact exercises (like running and lifting weights) are best. This leaves many people assuming that their low-impact workouts aren't doing much to improve bone strength. Swimming has long been touted as a low-impact exercise, one that's easier on the body and good for individuals with joint pain.

However, a recent study from Israel's Wingate Institute in Netanya indicates that women who frequently swim laps have greater leg bone mass than women who don't swim at all.

Action Sparked

While weight-bearing exercises **are the best** way to strengthen your bones, swimming is another option, especially for obese exercisers who experience pain and difficulty moving. Try adding a few laps to your regular routine to relieve boredom, and to surprise your muscles...*and* bones!

From Sparkpeople.com



Drop Pounds at the Pool



A swimming pool—the kind with lanes, not a swim-up bar—triggers a negative twinge in many people. Too cold, too inconvenient, too... wet and that's too bad. Swimming gives you a great cardiovascular workout with none of the joint-jarring of running. You'll burn roughly the same number of calories per minute as you would bike, without the traffic risks. You'll get a restorative workout that helps you come back strong in your other sports.

Swimming builds functional strength, starting with your core muscles—back, chest, abdominals. Problem is, many can't swim properly—they thrash, struggle, sink, and give up. Not you. Your swimming lesson, adult version, begins here.

LEAD with the top of your head, not your forehead, for better head-spine alignment. Look at the bottom of the pool, not ahead.

PUSH DOWN with your chest until your hips and legs feel light. That "sinking feeling" you may notice is just your legs and hips naturally riding lower in the water than your upper body. Pressing your chest down gives you better balance. With each stroke, press each armpit into the water.

SLIP your arm into the water with each stroke as if you were sliding it into a sleeve. A longer body line reduces drag. Extend your arm until your shoulder touches your jaw.

BE QUIET with your body. Waves indicate wasted effort. Imagine you're piercing the water and slipping through a small hole.

The Starter Swimming Workout:

This 30-minute workout allows for lots of rest.

SET 1: Swim 8 x 25 yards focusing on head and chest position, resting for five deep breaths after each length. Then swim 25, 50, 75, and 100 yards. (Take a five-breath rest after each distance.) Note how many strokes you take on the 25. Swim the remaining laps at a consistent effort, counting strokes. A tired swimmer uses more strokes.

SET 2: Swim 8 x 25 with a focus on a longer body line. Then swim 100, 75, 50, and 25 yards. (Take the same rests as above.) Swim the 100 very easily. Count your strokes and divide by 4. That number serves as your benchmark for the rest of the set.

SET 3: Swim 8 x 25 with a focus on "quiet" form. Then swim 25, 50, 75, and 100 yards. (Take the same rests as above.) Note the number of strokes you take on the 25. See if swimming quietly improves your efficiency.

Provided by Men's Health