

# Food and exercise play pivotal roles in our stress levels

Are the kids driving you crazy? Do you have no time for yourself because you're too busy meeting other people's needs? Stress, it's everywhere in our lives. There's stress at work, there are the demands from family, there are car pools, there's endless housework, there are illnesses and money concerns...the list goes on and on.

You may think that stress is something you just have to deal with or that it's mind over matter. To some degrees those things are true. But you do have some control over how much stress can affect your life, both emotionally and physiologically. Believe it or not, stress does manifest itself physically in our bodies and food and exercise play major roles in our anxiety levels.

When you are stressed out you reach for a candy bar or potato chips? Most people eat the wrong foods when stress is prevalent in their lives and poor eating habits can actually increase your stress levels.

When we are stressed out, it changes the way our bodies use and absorb nutrients. Stress increases our need for carbohydrates, antioxidants, B vitamins and iron, for instance. But at the same time, the anxiety decreases our body's ability to absorb these nutrients.

It is important to nourish yourself properly in times of stress because your metabolism speeds up and needs particular nutrients. Some foods are calming while others can make stress even worse. I have a few food tips that will help you to fight stress.

1. Drink juice and water in the morning. Start your day with a glass of orange juice and continue drinking lots of water and unsweetened juice throughout the day. The orange juice supplies the extra vitamin C that your body needs in abundance during stressful times. The water (drink eight glass per day) will keep you from dehydration which can put additional stress on your body. As a bonus, water cleanses your system, fills you up and is excellent for you! Do not choose sodas, coffee or iced tea rationalizing that they all have water in them. They do contain water but the sugar and caffeine can greatly aggravate stress levels.

2. Eat a low-sugar, high-fiber breakfast. We all need an energy boost in the morning from something other than coffee. An ideal breakfast for the anxiety-prone is a banana, some hi-fiber cereal, and low-fat yogurt. Why? When our metabolism is speeding up, our bodies require more vitamins B6 as well as protein. Bananas provide the B6 and yogurt ful-

fills the protein category. It's important to keep your protein source low in fat because a high-fat diet can work against the immune system which is already challenged by stress. Be careful not to overdo it on the B vitamins by taking supplements, though. Unbalanced supplements may put additional stress on your body. The fiber is needed in the morning and throughout the day to help regulate your digestive system which can be irregular during stressful times.

3. Limit yourself to one cup of coffee, max! Caffeine actually causes anxiety which is exactly what we're trying to avoid. It makes you feel a temporary "buzz" by speeding you up but then you come down hard which puts your whole system under stress.

4. Take sweets out of your cupboard, your desk drawers, your candy dishes, wherever! Have someone else hide them if you have to. Snacking on sweets is a reaction to the extreme sugar cravings caused by a particular hormone released during stress. A sugary snack will only fuel the stress by putting you on a sugar rollercoaster all day while you end up eating lots of empty calories and probably adding pounds to your waistline. Instead, satisfy your sugar cravings with complex carbohydrates like fruits or whole grain breads, bagels and pastas. Carbohydrates stimulate the brain's production of serotonin which has a calming effect.

5. Exercise instead of relaxing with a drink after work. Take the dog for a walk or play a team sport with some friends rather than go out for a drink after work. Alcohol actually puts more stress on your body while exercise naturally takes your mind off your stresses and leaves you feeling relaxed and energized. While exercise burns off stress in your body, it also burns those extra calories. A one-time exercise session can leave you better able to deal with the problems in your life with a calmer mind. But a regular exercise regime (at least three days per week) can make you less prone to stress all the time. That's a pretty good argument for keeping fit!

The right foods and exercise can make a world of difference in your life by helping to edge out stress. You may not be able to control your boss, your kids or your finances but you can help control your body's reactions to stresses. Why not start today? You'll feel happier and healthier! Try it, you'll like it!

I welcome your comments and ideas about my article and look forward to reading more of your letters! Please send any questions, suggestions or inspirational stories for upcoming articles to: "Talk to the Mirror," Weight Watchers Corporate Communications, P.O. Box 9072, Farmington Hills, Mich. 48334-2974 or fax (248) 653-7106. (Florine Mark is an appointee to the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation.)



FLORINE MARK

# There is help for shin splints

**Q**uestion: What are shin splints? What can I do about them? This seems to be a regular problem with me.

**A**nswer: Shin splints, shin splints, shin splints! Our least serious yet most common injury. Shin splints are not a life-threatening condition or even a permanent condition, so don't worry.

Shin splints are an irritation and inflammation of the anterior tibia - the muscle that stretches across the front of the lower leg or shin. Shin splints occur when the tibia muscle is overworked, strained or becomes partially separated from the bone (small tears in the connective tissue). Usually swelling occurs and the condition often results in acute or chronic pain.

What causes shin splints? In many cases over-pronation of the ankle will cause shin splints. In referring to over-pronation of the ankle, we mean the ankle rolls inward, creating a biomechanical instability that places excessive stress on the tibia muscle in front of the leg. This condition is caused mainly by heredity and can be corrected by wearing the proper shoes and, also

at times, with an orthotic added to help.

Another common cause of shin splints can be muscle overuse. Our calf muscles (soleus and gastrocnemius) are extremely strong; the shin muscle is weak in comparison. This muscle imbalance (weak shins and strong calves) causes part of the problem.



MYRNA PARTRICH

Prevention of shin splints is an easy task. If you are a runner, try to reduce the stress on your feet by running on only running on flat, level and soft, yet stable, surfaces.

If aerobics is your activity, be sure the floor surface is right. It should be a perma-cushion floating wood floor. A simple tip is when walking in an exercise room, you should be stepping up onto the floor at least a few inches.

Stretching and warm-up exercises not only help prevent injuries but are essential for achieving peak performance. And while stretching improves flexibility, a good warmup

increases the delivery of fresh oxygen to the muscles. You should always begin an exercise routine with a session including 8-10 minutes of light stretching and warm-up exercises.

It is also imperative that you strengthen your shin muscles, preferably within the warm-up time. If you picture a runner's stretch against the floor rather than the wall, position the front knee bent 90 degrees and the back leg straight back. Then, press your weight forward and tap your front toes up and down. Do this until you feel that shin muscle stressed. Stop and straighten both legs back and relax into the stretch.

Take notice of your shoes because your lower leg takes the brunt of most aerobic exercise. Each time your foot strikes, your lower leg is subjected to a stress that is equal to three times your body weight.

You can minimize this shock by buying the proper shoe with ample cushioning and support. A fairly rigid heel construction helps prevent excessive lateral movement of the heel.

Orthotics, foot supports that fit inside your shoes, can correct and prevent excessive ankle pronation which causes shin splints. They should be custom made for you. Check with a sports medicine doctor or

an orthopedic surgeon for the proper prescription.

What is the proper treatment for shin splints? Don't worry, I am not going to tell you to stop exercising completely. However, you might have to reduce the duration and intensity of your aerobic activity. Try non- or low-impact aerobics for a change of pace.

If possible, try to ice the areas of your shins that are tender immediately after your workout. If this is not possible, try to ice twice a day - 15 to 20 minutes each time.

The best way to ice is to put cubes into a wet cloth. Take off the ice every few minutes for the few seconds and rub the area hard with your thumb in a circular fashion.

I hope I have completely answered your questions. If you follow all the preventive measures, you should have no problems. Don't be overly concerned - shin splints are truly the lightest injury you can have.

(Myrna Partrich is co-owner of The Workout Co. in Bloomfield Hills. She is an appointee to the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and the Michigan Fitness Foundation. Send questions or comments for Myrna to Myrna Partrich, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham MI 48009.)

## HEALTHY LIVING

**Healthy Living** spotlights Oakland County-related health and medical information. To submit information, write: Healthy Living, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham MI, 48009. Or fax: (248) 644-1314.

### WILLIAM BEAUMONT HOSPITAL

■ "Parenting the Young Child", an eight-week course to help parents of children ages 5 and under develop effective parenting skills, begins Thursday, Jan. 22. The program will be held at the Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center, Classroom A, 746 Purdy, Birmingham. Cost is \$25 per couple. Call 1-800-633-7377 to register or for more information. Classes run from 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m. through March 12.

■ "Fit for Delivery", a five-session series for expectant mothers offering exercise and comfort techniques for a healthy, active pregnancy, starts Tuesday, Feb. 3. Classes will be held from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. at William Beaumont Hospital, Physical Therapy gym/second floor, 44201 Dequindre Road, Troy. Cost is \$50. Call 1-800-633-7377 for details.

■ A "Baby Care and Safety" class teaching basic care for baby's first year of life will be offered at the following dates and times: Wednesday, Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., William Beaumont Hospital, Classroom F, 44201 Dequindre Road, Troy; Wednesday, Feb. 18, 7 p.m.-10 p.m., Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center, Classroom C & D, 746 Purdy, Birmingham; Tuesday, Feb. 24, 7 p.m.-10 p.m., Beaumont Medical Building, Conference Room A & B, 6900 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. Cost is \$20 per couple. Call 1-800-633-7377 to register.

■ A "Childbirth Education" class, a review of the labor delivery process and relaxation and breathing techniques

for expectant couples, is scheduled for the following dates and times: Saturday, Feb. 7, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center, Classroom B, 746 Purdy, Birmingham; Tuesday, Feb. 10 and 17, 7 p.m.-9 p.m., William Beaumont Hospital, Classroom C, 44201 Dequindre Road, Troy; Saturday, Feb. 28, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Beaumont Medical Building, First Floor Classroom, 6700 N. Rochester Road, Rochester Hills. Cost is \$25. Call 1-800-633-7377 to register.

■ A three-hour cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) course providing instruction in single-rescuer CPR for adults, and the signs and symptoms for heart attack and stroke will be held at the following locations: Wednesday, Feb. 4, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., William Beaumont Hospital, Classroom J and K, 44199 Dequindre Road, Troy; Tuesday, Feb. 17, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center, Classroom C & D, 746 Purdy, Birmingham. Cost is \$25. Call 1-800-633-7377 to register.

■ An infant/child CPR one-session course on basic techniques of CPR and choking for parents and grandparents of infants and young children is scheduled for the following locations: Monday, Feb. 2, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Beaumont Medical Building, First Floor Classroom, 6700 N. Rochester Road, Rochester Hills; Thursday, Feb. 5, 12, 19 and 26, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center, Classrooms C & D, 746 Purdy, Birmingham; Monday, Feb. 9, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., Beaumont Medical Building, Conference Rooms A & B, 6900 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield; Wednesday, Feb. 11 and 25, 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m., William Beaumont Hospital, Classrooms J & K, 44201 Dequindre, Troy. Cost is \$25. Call 1-800-633-7377 to register.

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the three-hour removal of one of his two healthy kidneys.

"The biggest worry was that the passage of the kidney from our son to Max would be complicated and wouldn't run smoothly," recalled Dubrinsky's wife, Michele.

But all worries were quickly put to rest when the procedure, which has a 95-percent success rate, was completed. And when it was learned that for the first

time in 18 years, Dubrinsky experienced a big dose of health-iness.

"You feel instantly great within hours after surgery because everything is working," he said. "We were both out of the hospital in a week. They let us go within two hours of each other."

Post-hospital recovery time for Dubrinsky was two weeks. For Mark, the adjustment to functioning with only one kidney lasted an entire month.

Dubrinsky has lived with kidney disease since the age of 22. But his condition never reached a serious stage until a triple heart bypass surgery in 1992 caused his kidneys to shut down.

As his health continued to decline, leaving him more and more tired, Dubrinsky dropped his workload to half time and waited for news of a healthy organ that would turn his life around.

He underwent transplant surgery in 1995, just a week before he would begin requiring dialysis treatments. Now he takes his anti-rejection medications religiously and has no other restrictions on his activities.

"Everyday he gets up and says he's happy to be alive, that he's happy to get older," said Michele.

"I have more energy. I feel better," said Dubrinsky, who now serves as a board member of the National Kidney Foundation. "It's a miracle I'm here. I can do anything I want now. Before I was too tired."

Mark, now 32, is living in Manhattan and working as an investment banker for C. S. First Boston Corp. "I know he's with me everyday," said his father. "Wherever I go, a part of him is there."

Currently, there are 1,595 Michigan residents waiting for a lifesaving kidney transplant. Last year, 152 hopeful organ transplant patients died waiting.

"If they published more statistics on people waiting for organs like they publish the football standings, I think it would have an impact on people," added Dubrinsky. "It's critically important that they consider donations of their organs to give people a second chance at life and to improve the quality of life."

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## Sechler from page D5

state's 2,365 patients currently on the transplant list waiting for that precious organ that can save their lives.

Last year, 430 patients received organ transplants and 152 patients died waiting.

"I think the real tragedy is that healthy organs are not being donated and people are dying because those organs are going to waste," Sechler added. "All I would ask is that people talk about donating."