Living Well with Stress

Spring is a time of renewal. So this month EmblemHealth offers you suggestions about how to renew your commitment to living well while managing your stress.

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to positive or negative life situations, and dealing with it is important to your overall health. Dedicating time for fun and relaxing activities can help you cope with stress.

Start with some basic stress reducers: exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, get a full night’s sleep and drink alcohol responsibly. To quickly relieve stress, take a break and step away from the source. In addition, try these basic stretches that you can do while seated at your desk.

9 SIMPLE SEATED STRETCHES

**Neck Stretch**: Turn your head to the right, gently lower your chin to your shoulder, and make a half-circle to your left shoulder. Then, reverse to the right.

**Shoulder Roll**: Roll your shoulders forward and backward in a smooth, circular motion.

**Upper Back Stretch**: Place your hands on your shoulders (elbows lifted) and try to bring your elbows together in front of your chest as your head drops forward.

**Chest Stretch**: Clasp your hands behind your head and press your elbows back.

**Shoulder Stretch**: Clasp your hands behind your back and slowly straighten your elbows.

**Side Stretch**: Place your right hand on the right edge of your chair seat and lift your left arm to the ceiling. Slowly lean to the right. Change arms and reverse sides.

**Spinal Twist**: Place both hands on right armrest. Turn your torso and head to the right. Hold the stretch and reverse sides.

**Back Relaxer**: Gently round the torso over your legs (your chest may rest on your thighs). Slowly roll up, vertebrae by vertebrae, and restack your spine to return to an upright position. Your head should be the last thing to come up.

**Complete Breath**: Inhale deeply through your nose and let the air first fill the bottom of your lungs, then the middle of your lungs, and finally the top of your lungs. When you reach your full inhalation, hold your breath for a count of three and begin a controlled exhalation. Your breath should be one continuous flow from inhalation to full exhalation.

Although stress may be a part of everyday life, you can learn to control its effects by taking time to unwind and recharge your mind and body!