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Alliant's Health e-Newsletter is published monthly for our clients and their employees.

Your comments, story ideas, and suggestions are welcome. Please email them to: news@alliantservices.com

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This e-newsletter is designed to benefit you and your employees, so please feel free to forward it to family, friends and co-workers!

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition and would like to hear from you with any questions, concerns, or suggestions. Send us an email at news@alliantservices.com.

The Power of Food

Most of life's circumstances are beyond our control. Family, work and busy schedules can bring all of us a certain amount of stress and anxiety. In my work with patients with difficulty managing their weight, stress is often reported as the number one thing that triggers emotional eating, which means reaching for food for comfort and support rather than asking for help. Why? Because asking for help is hard. We tell ourselves stories about what it means to not have it all figured out, and then feel embarrassed, ashamed and just plain afraid of what others will think of us because we are facing the same challenges we faced six months or a year ago.

What I'd like to emphasize is that most people are just so over scheduled, over committed and exhausted that asking for help also feels like one more thing to add to an extremely long "to do" list. However, research suggests that people are more likely to stick with any weight control program when a calorie controlled meal plan is combined with some form of group support. In fact, it doesn't have to be professional support, although that is a reliable source, it could be a committed team of family and friends who are emotionally available and know your struggles. The key factor in making a support system work for you is finding and educating people about how they can support you no matter what challenges you are facing. Here are a few simple steps that might make getting started easier:

1. What do I want? Spend a few moments making a specific list of things that you want to accomplish. This is where you set some goals for yourself. Keep the list visible, refer back to it and create Outlook reminders to get you started.
2. What do I need? Next write down the kinds of things that you will need help with: menu planning, exercise motivation, inspirational materials, more sleep.
3. Who is best suited for what? Make another list of people who are good at the things you want to be doing. Ask for their help with certain things. No one wants to be solely responsible for your program. However, most people can follow through with a request for something specific.
4. When will I need help? Target certain times of the day when you'll need support (would a call from a friend on the way home from work be helpful in planning the evening?). It might be that too much alone time on a Sunday means boredom eating. Maybe scheduling a walk with a friend for the next three Sundays would be a good strategy to get out of that pattern.

It is imperative to set up a plan before you begin feeling vulnerable, overwhelmed or just plain hungry. Stay proactive rather than reactive when stressful circumstances head your way, because they will.





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Handling Workplace Stress

Stress is an inevitable part of almost every job. Sometimes, a certain amount of stress provides you with the motivation you need to complete a project by its deadline. However, too much of it can be overwhelming. That's why it's important to deal with workplace stress proactively. The following suggestions can help.

Manage your time.

Consider using a day planner, calendar or to-do list to help organize your projects. Prioritize your tasks by breaking them down into smaller, more manageable steps. When you have some free time, work ahead on projects that aren't immediate priorities but still need to get done eventually.

Talk with your manager.

Whether you're feeling swamped, or need advice on dealing with a particular co-worker or customer, he or she can help. Be prepared to offer your own ideas or solutions, as well.

Get organized.

A cluttered work area can add to your stress. Organize your workspace by putting things away and discarding anything else you don't need. And, cleaning up your area at the end of each day can help prepare you for a stress-free morning.

Take time to relax.

Find a few moments to stretch at your workstation. Loosen your neck muscles by slowly rolling your head in a circle. And, relieve tension in your back by extending your arms above your head and stretching as high as you can. Deep breathing exercises also can relieve tension.

Consider speaking with a counselor.

If you feel that stress is interfering with your daily life, you may want to seek professional help. Many organizations offer employee assistance programs or counselors who can help you deal with stress. Or, ask your doctor about resources in your community.

Watch your eating habits.

When you're in a rush or stressed out, it's easy to skip meals or fill up on unhealthy food. But, a poor diet can make you feel sluggish and tired and make it difficult to get through the day. So, be sure to eat a well-balanced breakfast and lunch each day. If you don't have the time for a sit-down breakfast, grab some fruit or whole-grain crackers to eat on the go.

Get moving.

Working out is a great way to reduce stress. If you have the opportunity, try to fit exercise into your day. Even taking a short 20-minute walk during your lunch break can benefit your health, refresh your mind and help you prepare for the rest of your day.

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