

# Solutions

FOR PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

## Healthy Lifestyle Choices

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Happy September! Despite the fact that it was over 90 degrees for the first 2 days of the month and the fact that summer does, in fact, continue on until Sept. 21, many of us have and will always associate September with a time of new beginning. For those of us with children, grandchildren or anyone in our lives starting a new school year, a “new beginning feel” is all around. It seems like an opportune time to step back and take stock. This month the focus for e-tips will be health. We will look at ways to promote and maintain physical and psychological health to enhance both the quantity and quality of life. Research supports the idea that those who lead a healthy lifestyle, generally live longer, have fewer disabilities and preserve better cognitive abilities. Further, those who are well informed about their healthcare options, including preventive care, receive better healthcare.

The healthcare delivery system in the United States is amongst the most complex in the world according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Understanding what services are available to you can be difficult. Read through material about your insurance benefits including preventive services and screenings. Public and private insurances cover the costs of a variety of services. If you have particular questions, phoning representatives about your plan coverage or speaking to human resource staff can be helpful. Some healthcare services are free, such as screenings. For example, October 7, 2010 is National Depression Screening Day when free online and in person screenings are offered at locations across the country. Locally, depression screening sites include the Institute of Living Assessment Center (Ground Floor, Donnelly Building), 11 am to 1 pm and 5 to 7 PM, and Natchaug Hospital locations in Vernon, Mansfield, Groton and Putnam.

The impact of a generally healthy lifestyle cannot be overstated.

- ▶ Eating nutritiously is important. In our culture where portion size is often greatly exaggerated and the nutritional value of processed foods can be hard to assess, this can be a challenge.
- ▶ Drink alcohol only in moderation.
- ▶ Get regular exercise to develop strength, flexibility and aerobic conditioning.
- ▶ A healthy lifestyle also requires adequate rest and sleep.
- ▶ Be aware of your family health history and your specific health risks, if possible, so that your healthcare can be personalized.
- ▶ Develop stress management strategies that work for you.

- ▶ Be aware that the particulars of how to incorporate these into your lifestyle will change across your lifespan.
- ▶ Reevaluate your health habits periodically to ensure a good fit with your stage of life.

Psychological health also has a tremendous impact on quality of life. Take a big picture inventory. Are you spending time and energy on things in life that are truly important to you? It's easy to get overwhelmed by daily life logistics. Prioritize activities that are rejuvenating and try to find purpose and interest in everyday activities. Invest in things, activities and people outside yourself. Do you feel connected to others and is your social network broad enough and deep enough to enhance your life? At various life stages social networks may need to be modified. Certain interpersonal relations might not fit your needs any longer as interests and priorities change. New support systems may need cultivation. Expect change in life and learn to be flexible to accommodate it while being aware that change itself (positive and negative) can be stressful.

Solicit help if you feel stuck or think it might be useful. Remember that SOLUTIONS Employee Assistance Program is a free, confidential resource available to employees and their family members to help navigate change.

***Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance  
for all of life's challenges.  
It's free, confidential and open to your family members.  
Check us out on-line at [www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)***