

Wellness-Fitness

FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

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Healthy Aging: Feeling Young, Staying Connected

It may be true that “**you’re as young as you feel.**” However, feeling young doesn’t come without some effort.

Healthy aging is about taking care of yourself. People who are successful at aging are active—physically and mentally, while also being active in their communities. Smart lifestyle choices can lead to robust health, while a positive attitude and good health habits can ensure continued well-being as we age.

GET MOVING

We tend to think of people slowing down and being less active as they get older. Yet, for better health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that older adults be active for *at least* a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes a week with moderately intense aerobic activity. That’s at a minimum—30 minutes for 5 days out of the week. In addition, the CDC also recommends 30 minutes of muscle-strengthening exercises (like exercising with resistance bands, lifting weights, etc.) at least two days a week. As one gains aerobic capacity and strength, the time periods above can be increased for even greater health benefits.

BE MENTALLY ACTIVE

Maintain your mental health and agility by:

- Reading
- Taking a continuing education class in your community
- Enjoying a hobby

- Learning new skills, like a new language
- Attending lecture series at your library or a local museum
- Enjoying puzzles, word games, and brain exercises

BE SOCIAL

Stay connected with friends, family, and neighbors.

- Volunteer
- Visit friends
- Write letters
- Stay connect through the Internet
- Telephone someone close to you

OTHER KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL AGING

Besides the suggestions above, some of the essentials of successful aging include:

- Eating well
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Regularly scheduled checkups and screenings
- Keeping up with your vaccinations (flu, pneumonia, etc.)

Avoid things that are detrimental to your health such as:

- Smoking and other tobacco use

- Too much salt/sodium
- Too much fat
- Too much alcohol
- Too much sugar
- High cholesterol
- Too much stress

No matter what our age, healthy lifestyle choices can bring more vibrancy to each day—so begin to be an active participant in your health. Start as early as possible and establish good habits. The goal is to stay healthy, productive, and engaged—enjoying every minute of life—“**adding life to years and years to your life.**” □



Renew—Take a Break to Stretch

Did you ever get so involved in your work that you forgot to take a much-needed break? You don't have to forego it, especially when a rejuvenating stretching session can be as close as the chair you're sitting on.

Making stretching a part of your daily routine can help your posture and circulation. Stretching can also help with soreness and stiffness—especially in the neck and spine—that can be caused by spending so much time in the same position. After a bit of stretching, you'll come back to your tasks with renewed vigor.

When stretching, it's important to listen to your body and honor its limits. Don't push yourself too far; a gentle extension is all you need to get the benefits. Here are some basic stretching exercises that you can easily do in your office.

SPINE AND ARM EXTENSION

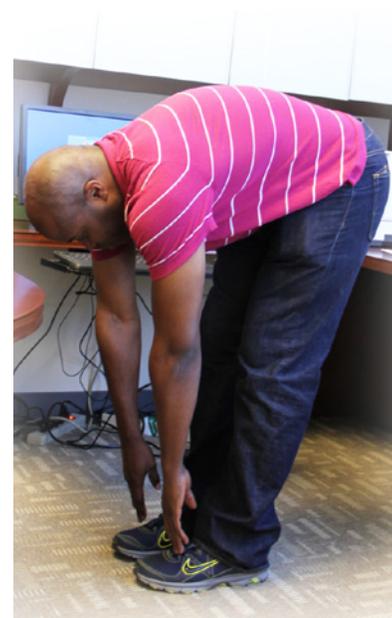
While sitting or standing, interlace the hands and stretch them above you. The palms will be facing the ceiling. Imagine your spine getting longer and straighter as the hands extend above you.

At first, the palms may be more in front of your body than above your head—not to worry, in time you'll gain more flexibility.



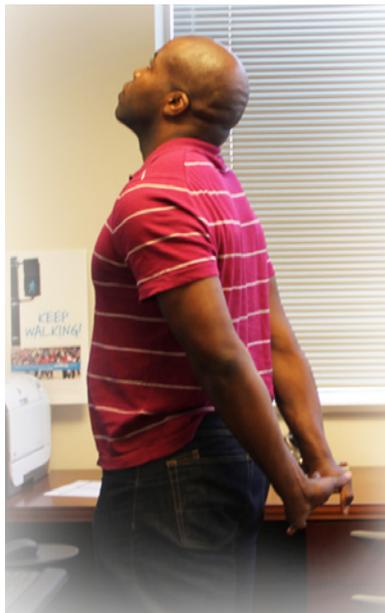
FORWARD FOLD

Bend over, touch your toes if you can—if not, touch your knees or shins. Relax the body completely as your spine extends. Release the tension in your neck. Slowly and carefully bring yourself back up to a complete upright position. You can touch your hands to opposite elbows and let gravity help you—if this doesn't feel too intense for you.



STANDING BACK BEND

Stand up and interlace the hands behind you. Let your shoulders relax and your chest open, as the hands extend toward the floor. This is great for opening your chest and relaxing your shoulders.



NECK ROLLS

Very slowly and gently roll the head in a circle, first going in one direction and then the other. The head is extending away from the body as the neck makes a complete circle. Think extra slow and easy for this particular exercise—you can imagine that you're moving through molasses.



When It Comes to Food Portions, Size Matters

In study after study, scientists and nutritionists find that if you serve people more food, they will eat more food. **That holds true even if they don't even like the food!**

One of the most effective approaches to avoid gaining weight is to limit the size of the food portions on our plates.

In one study, movie-goers in Philadelphia were given buckets of two-week-old popcorn – some got large buckets and some got medium-size buckets. “Those who received the large containers ate 34 percent more stale popcorn than those who received the medium containers,” according to a 2005 article in *The Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*—even though they said they didn't like the stale popcorn.

But it can be difficult to keep our food portions reasonable when some eateries use super-size servings, or all-you-can-eat buffets, as a major selling point. That's why it pays for each of us to get smart about portion size.

Here are a few tips that can help:

Labels can be misleading. Packaged foods usually show how many calories and how much fat are in a “serving.” But the average person will probably eat more than one standard serving, so the information on the package can lead you to believe that you're consuming less than you actually are.

In restaurants, ordering smaller portions can save money while still giving everyone a tasty meal. Try splitting an entrée with a companion, or ordering

In front of the television, serve moderate amounts of snack foods in bowls, rather than placing big packages of chips within easy reach.

Ideally, one should avoid eating while watching television.

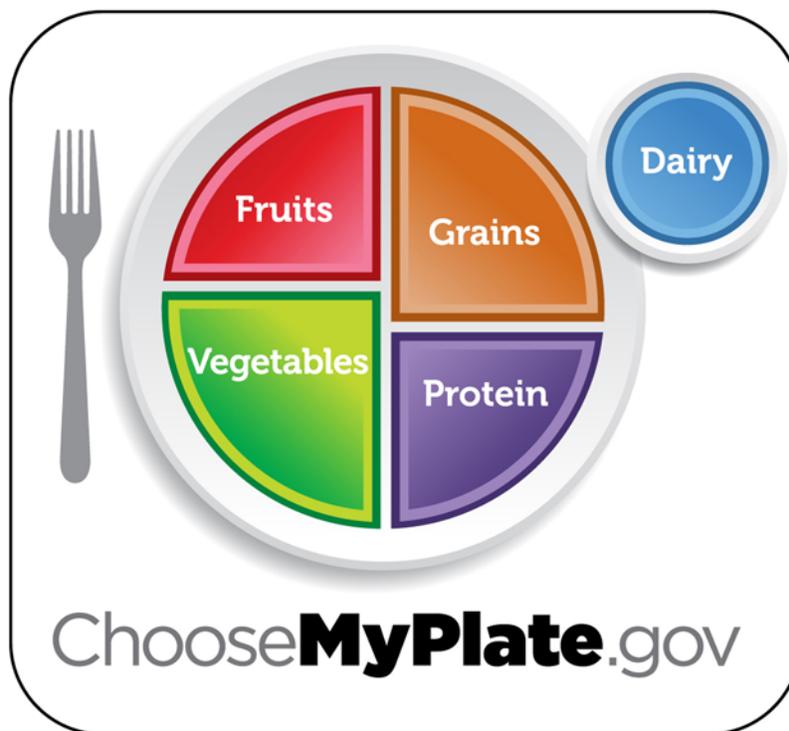
At breakfast, reaching for a packaged single serving of cereal rather than pouring cereal out of the box is an easy way to control portion size.

Eating out of a smaller dish rather than a big dinner plate can help keep portion size under control.

The Web site www.ChooseMyPlate.gov is an excellent resource for more information

about portion size and healthy eating.

Portion control can play a valuable role in our seemingly never-ending quest to arrive and stay at a healthy weight. Along with selecting good foods, getting sufficient exercise, and monitoring health risks, it can help us feel well and more fit. □



an appetizer as your main dish.

The “doggie bag” can be a good friend when eating out. You can even ask the waiter to put half the meal in a take-out box before it arrives at the table.

At home, place reasonable portions on individual plates while leaving the serving dishes or cooking pots out of reach on the stove or kitchen counter. That way, we're not as likely to go for seconds and thirds.





Social Phobia: More Than Just Shyness

For some individuals, the anxiety caused by social situations becomes overwhelming and keeps them from participating in life as fully as they would like.

Some people are outgoing, “life of the party” types, while others are naturally introverted and don’t like drawing attention to themselves. In fact, people who experience shyness on a regular basis often find group situations challenging.

Meeting new people or going to parties and other large social gatherings can be quite taxing for them.

Social phobia, sometimes called social anxiety disorder, goes beyond what we consider simple shyness. Phobia means “fear of.” In social phobia it’s fear of public situations.

It’s easy to understand how people might be nervous if they’re on stage giving a presentation or acting in a play. Yet, this is the type of anxiety that people with social phobia experience on a daily basis. Social phobia is an intense and real fear of being watched, judged, or embarrassed. A person with social phobia often feels extremely self-conscious. This condition can

cause physical, emotional, and mental symptoms just like other phobias.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, some of the signs and symptoms of social phobia include:

- Consistently avoiding other people and social situations
- Being extremely self-conscious in front of others
- Having a strong fear of being embarrassed
- Being overly anxious about being with other people
- Regularly experiencing outward signs of anxiety, like blushing, sweating, or trembling around other people
- Persistently fearing the judgment of others
- Worrying for days or weeks before attending a social situation or event
- Having a difficult time making friends
- Feeling physically sick (nauseous) when with other people

If you’re living with social phobia, you are not alone. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that about 12.1 percent of people in the United States will experience social phobia in their lifetime.

If you suspect that you experience social anxiety, you can speak with your health care provider, or you can seek support or a referral from your employee assistance program (EAP) services at your agency. Your HR representative can tell you how to contact your EAP.

Social phobia is a relatively common, but serious condition. The good news is that there are a number of effective treatments. And, the sooner you start feeling better, the sooner you’ll be able to live your life more fully. □

