

HEALTH BENEFITS E-NEWS

*Department of Human Resource Management
Office of Health Benefits*

December 21, 2022

CommonHealth Wellness Program

CommonHealth, the employee wellness program for Virginia agencies, is now a part of the Office of Health Benefits. The CommonHealth team of 10 Wellness Consultants is spread across Virginia and we're available to deliver in-person and/or virtual health education programs for your agency site. Today, we're happy to share our weekly wellnote.

Each week our wellnote message is different. We share quick tips and ideas to maintain or improve your health and wellness. Right now we're in the midst of our "Maintain Don't Gain" holiday challenge so you'll see tips on staying active, eating healthfully, managing stress and getting enough rest during this busy season. The EAP contact information for Optima is 800-899-8174 or 757-363-6777 and www.optimaeap.com

Please share this message with employees at your agency and feel free to reach out to us with any questions or to schedule a session for your group. Our main email address is wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov.





MAINTAIN, DON'T GAIN CHALLENGE AVOID STRESS RELATED EATING OR SNACKING

The Holidays can trigger “stress or emotional eating.” These behaviors tend to worsen negative emotions, like sadness or anger. Here are a few strategies to consider.

Address the root cause.

Emotional eating can be triggered by short-term issues such as a bad day at work, or long-term issues like chronic anxiety or depression. It would be beneficial to identify and address the source of emotional eating. Ask your doctor about counseling and/or stress management.

Help is available to address emotional issues. Your Employee Assistance Program is a great place to start:

Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield at 1-855-223-9277
www.anthemepap.com

Aetna at 1-888-238-6232 / www.covahealthaware.com

Kaiser Permanente HMO at (866) 517-7042 (toll free)
<http://www.achievesolutions.net/kaiser>



Ask why you are eating.

When headed to the refrigerator, pantry or snack machine, ask a simple question: “Am I really hungry?” Avoid mindless eating, and recognize your motivation. Is it truly hunger, dehydration, or simply boredom? Being more aware may help you decide to drink a refreshing glass of water, and do something else besides eat at the moment.

Swap snacks for healthier choices.

Try not to stock your pantry with giant bags of chips or ultra-processed foods, which can raise levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Instead have crunchy carrots and crisp celery ready to eat. For a salty snack, serve yourself a cup or two of popcorn (with salt and oil only), or whole grain crackers. These are both excellent sources of the feel-good hormone serotonin.

Processed sweets can make certain mental concerns like symptoms of depression worse. So if sadness or anger trigger your sweet tooth, try keeping a bowl of fruit ready at home or in the office for easy access.

Choose foods that fight stress.

Hot tea is emotionally soothing, contains helpful antioxidants and amino acids that help reduce stress. Dark cherries which naturally increase melatonin, make a great nighttime snack to help you sleep. Salmon and other fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids may help not only with sleep but also with preventing depression.

Please do not reply to this email. You may send inquiries regarding the CommonHealth Wellness Program to wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov.