**Annual Health & Wellness Fair**

The Center for Student Health & Psychological services is pleased to announce the annual Health & Wellness Fair, **Wed. March 2nd, 10am-2pm, Angell Center Ballrooms**.

This will be the 17th year for this event! The theme is “Spring into Wellness.” We will have a tropical atmosphere with music, food and fun.

There will be several Plattsburgh State departments, local agencies, and screening booths offering a variety of information on health and wellness. One of our popular booths, sponsored by Community Link, offers cholesterol and blood sugar screenings.

There will be free Coca-Cola products available for participants and hourly door prize drawings. We hope you will be able to join us on our tropical vacation to enhance your awareness of wellness and further your growth toward a healthy lifestyle. Please join us!

**Support Groups**

To register for any of the groups, please call 564-3086. Groups will run only if enough students are interested. All calls are strictly confidential.

**Meditation Group (open to students, staff, and faculty)**

One-hour of individual sitting meditation and discussion. All traditions and levels of experience are welcome. Wednesdays at 5:00 pm.

Coordinators: Wendy Lehman, 561-9445 & Jacob Hadden, Ph.D., 564-3086.

Location: Student Health Center Conference Room #148

**Self Development Group (open to students only)**

General psychotherapy group designed to reach a broad group of students experiencing a diverse set of issues with a common theme of having the ability to benefit from peer feedback and insight. The group is tentatively scheduled to be held on Tuesdays from 3:00 to 4:00 pm with a start date to be determined. Improve your ability to manage personal issues; expand self-awareness; build self-esteem; improve social skills; gain coping skills; and receive feedback from peers in a supportive environment.

Coordinator: Kathryn Haendiges, Psy.D.

Location: Student Health Center Conference Room #148

**The Body Image and Eating Issues Group (open to students only)**

Support group designed to help students who are dealing with issues related to food and self-esteem. The group will combine discussion with structured activities to encourage problem solving and exploration of feelings. Day and time to be determined.

Coordinator: Carol Shuttleworth, Ph.D.

Location: Student Health Center Conference Room #148

**Coming Out Support Group (open to students only)**

This group is designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered individuals to discuss general mental health issues. A broad range of topics is possible and might include coming out concerns, relationship issues, self-esteem, and identity development. Day and time to be determined.

Coordinator: Kathryn Haendiges, Psy.D.

Location: Student Health Center Conference Room #148

**In this issue:**

- Reducing the Harmful Effects of Stress, Part One
- March is National Nutrition Month
- February/March Calendars
Stress can cause or aggravate a large array of symptoms. This first article on stress will help you better understand the nature of stress and how it may affect you. The more common effects of acute stress include:

- Skin: hives, sweating
- Heart and blood vessels: rapid heart rate, feeling of palpitations, elevated blood pressure
- Gastrointestinal tract: diarrhea, abdominal pain, decrease or increase in appetite
- Muscles and joints: achiness, back pain, chest pain or tightness
- Brain: irritability, anger, decreased concentration, headache, insomnia
- Body as a whole: fatigue

The stress reaction is built into our biological being. Dating back to our earliest ancestors our brain releases stress hormones in response to an immediate danger. We get ready to fight or flee (fight-or-flight response). Our pulse rate increases, the heart beats more forcefully, our breathing is faster, our muscles tense. This response is very useful if we are trying to avoid physical danger such as a natural disaster or a physical threat.

In the college years significant stresses may come from academic and financial issues, separation from family and loneliness, sexuality issues, career choices, and interpersonal relationships. Under these circumstances the body still gets ready to fight or flee, but now there is no physical outlet to metabolize the stress hormones that have been released. If this process continues to build we start to experience the effects of acute stress.

Some degree of stress can improve our performance. We all need stimulation and motivation. But beyond a certain point we begin to experience symptoms. Any chronic condition can also be aggravated by stress. We may not be aware that the symptoms we are experiencing are caused or aggravated by stress.

If stress is playing such an important role in my symptoms, why do I still have the symptoms when I don’t feel that stressed anymore?

For example you may experience chest pains caused by muscle spasms in the chest wall, that are brought on by acute stress. The acute stress subsides but the chest pains persist. So how can stress have been the cause in the first place? The answer appears to be that once the injury or insult builds up, in this case to the chest muscles, it takes time for the body to heal. Once started the symptoms seem to have a life of their own.

Are there any early warning signs? Yes!

In my own case I can become aware of a heaviness behind my eyes. Each individual can experience early stress differently. Your early symptoms can become your early warning signal. Learn to recognize them. Early action can reduce the harmful effects of stress.

Chronic stress can begin to wear down our bodies, including weakening our immune system. This can make us more susceptible to various types of infection and increase the risk of other disease. Therefore recognizing the effects of stress and reducing the harmful effects of stress are of major importance to long-term health.

The second and final article will deal with methods for reducing the harmful effects of stress.

Harvey I. Hurwitz, MD, DIM, MACP  
College Physician
March is National Nutrition Month

Good news everyone! Experts at the Harvard School of Public Health took some time to introduce their own “Healthy Pyramid,” deciding that it was time to make some important changes. These changes reflect what they have learned in the past decade since the USDA Food Guide Pyramid was introduced (1992). In particular, all of the advanced research on diet, health, and how it all intertwines had a great impact on what sort of path that they wanted to take in revising the pyramid. After all, the pyramid was just a “blueprint” of what health experts at the time believed to be a wholesome guide to proper nutrition. So they took a hard look at it and realized that there were a few things wrong with it.

Starting at the base of the earlier USDA Food Guide Pyramid, it was recommended to consume 6-11 servings of bread, cereal, rice and/or pasta. The reason these carbohydrates were placed at the base was because it was recommended to fill up on this macronutrient to avoid eating fat (which was deemed “evil” in the early 1990’s). What’s more, it wasn’t even specified what type of carbohydrates to consume, giving the impression that anyone could fill up on white bread, white rice, and pasta (rather than whole grains) which digest much more quickly, making one less satisfied. Moving up the pyramid is the vegetable group (3-5 servings) and the fruit group (2-4 servings). These two groups are the least controversial of all of the groups in the pyramid. Eating an abundance of these is one proven way to keep healthy, reducing cancer risks, heart disease and other chronic diseases. The lower limit (2,3) is actually too low of a number to strive for, while the higher limit (4,5) should really be the lower limit to consume. Also, starchy vegetables, such as potatoes and corn should be included with the carbohydrate group. The next two groups up are the proteins: meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group (2-3 servings) and the dairy group (2-3 servings). The protein group does not distinguish the difference between the “bad” saturated fat in red meat and the “good” fat in fish, nuts, and lean poultry. Some sources are just healthier than others, but the pyramid doesn’t show that. For healthy bones, we need calcium (plus vitamin D and exercise), which we can get from dairy products. But ongoing research is finding that dairy products alone might not be the best way to prevent osteoporosis. Drinking 3 servings of milk a day isn’t the only way to bone health. The top level, fats, oils, and sweets (use sparingly), doesn’t distinguish between the healthy omega 3,6, 9 fatty acids, and the other harmful saturated and trans fats. This group lumped all fats together as “bad.” When the pyramid was created, “fat is bad” was the message, and kept people from consuming the heart healthy monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and oils. Instead, people would replace fat with fat-free, sugar-full sweets, most likely the cause of the obesity and diabetes epidemic. So, looking back at these 10 years, it is apparent that the message of the Food Guide Pyramid is “Eat a diet high in carbohydrates and virtually no fat, and you’ll be healthy.”

However, through years of research, experts have learned a whole lot more about food and how it affects our bodies. In fact, they thought that it was important that the USDA pyramid should follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which is revised every five years to include the latest scientific research and also set standards for all federal nutrition programs. Now, the new pyramid provides us with an outline to make better food choices. The very bottom of the pyramid even includes daily exercise and weight control as its primary focus, since these elements along with proper nutrition go hand in hand, increasing one’s chances of taking on a healthy lifestyle. The rest of the pyramid goes into more detail about the types of foods that we should consume and how much of them. The new pyramid specifies whole grains (oatmeal, 100% whole wheat bread, and brown rice), which should be eaten at most meals. It also shows how plant oils are healthy fats, and examples of which to consume. Vegetables should be eaten in abundance, due to all of the health benefits of the fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that they contain, as well as eating 2-3 fruits per day. These all add flavor and color to your diet. Nuts and legumes are other healthy foods that should be included, as well as fish, poultry and eggs for other sources of protein. 1-2 servings of dairy products or a calcium supplement should be included, preferably no- or low-fat options. The top of the pyramid recommends to USE SPARINGLY red meats and butter (saturated fat), white rice, white bread, potatoes, past and sweets (increase blood sugar levels too quickly; no fiber). It even recommends a daily multivitamin to ensure that we get adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals. And of course, alcohol should be consumed in moderation.

Although this information is based on what the experts from the Harvard School of Public Health, keep your eyes peeled for a new food guide to pop up all over the place, on labels and in articles. This is because about one month ago (January) the USDA did, in fact, revise the Food Guide Pyramid under the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, which will be released this spring. You can read up on this new material at www.fda.gov. The recommendations are definitely a better approach to healthy living and eating than ever before. Hopefully, it will be revised over and over again to include new nutrition information found through studies and research.

Information from:
www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/pyramids.html
Written By: Cassie Alexander, Nutrition Intern through Sodexho
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