

ShiftWorker™

Achieving a Healthy Balance

December 2010



Heartburn: An Unwelcome Guest

Research shows that some shiftworkers struggle with digestive problems. Indigestion is one. Since the holidays dish out rich foods, overeating increases the chances for heartburn. What is heartburn? It's an uncomfortable pressure and burning behind your breastbone.

Besides the foods themselves, smoking, caffeine, carbonated beverages, eating too quickly and too much, and not chewing your food well enough take the blame for heartburn. Some medications, pregnancy and sleep apnea can also contribute to heartburn.

Strategies for Stopping Heartburn

- ✓ Avoid large meals and foods that tend to give you heartburn.
- ✓ Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- ✓ Avoid eating within two to three hours of lying down or going to bed.
- ✓ Get help to quit smoking. Avoid or cut back on alcohol use.
- ✓ Chew sugarless gum after meals to stimulate saliva production.
- ✓ Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothes that add pressure.
- ✓ Try over-the-counter medications before eating. Some may keep stomach acid from building up and temporarily relieve heartburn after eating.

Persistent heartburn?

It may be a signal of a more complex problem: Gastroesophageal reflux disease (or GERD) is when acid backwash from the stomach flows up into the esophagus. Prolonged acid reflux can cause serious complications. Call your health care provider if you have frequent heartburn.

End-of-Year Checkup

Like many people, you probably started this year resolving to eat better, slim down or finally look into possible health concerns. But as the year winds down, you may have found you put off those good intentions or slipped back into old habits. Reflect back on your year. **Turn the page for a quick end-of-year checkup.**



No Holiday Burnout This Year

'Tis the season when many people feel pressured to have a picture-perfect holiday. Add this to your everyday stress and it's easy to see why burnout is so common this time of the year.

Are you stressed out? Are you experiencing any of the following:

- Fatigue that doesn't seem to go away quickly
- Frequent illness
- Headaches, back pain, muscle aches
- Change in appetite or sleep habits
- Sense of failure, self-doubt
- Loss of motivation
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Withdrawal from responsibilities
- Social isolation
- Excessive consumption of food, drugs or alcohol



Should you exercise when you're sick? With a head cold you can usually maintain a soft or shortened workout, provided it doesn't make you feel worse. However, if you have fever, chest cough or other symptoms lower than neck level, rest until those symptoms subside. When in doubt, ask your health care provider.



3 Ways to Enjoy the Holidays

Turn the page.

QUICK STRETCH SESSION

Regular stretching is one-third of the exercise equation. What's the upside to stretching? It helps build flexibility and strength that your muscles need. Here are three gentle stretch sessions to try today. Hold each stretch gently for 10 to 30 seconds, but be sure not to stretch your muscles too far.



1. The neck bender. Tilt your head to the right, keeping shoulders down. Place your right hand on the left side of your head. Gently move your head toward your right shoulder, just until you feel a slight release of tension (and hold). Switch sides and repeat.



2. The calf extender. Stand two to three feet from a wall with your feet perpendicular to the wall. Lean with your palms against the wall, keeping one leg straight and bringing the other forward slightly, bending at the knee. Keeping your heels on the floor (point toes at the wall, not angled in or out), feel the stretch in the straight leg. Hold, switch legs and repeat.



3. The thigh suspender. Standing, place your left hand against a wall for balance, raise your right ankle and grab it with the right hand; pull the heel gently toward the buttocks. Hold while keeping your back straight. Switch sides and repeat.

**"To wish to be well is a part of becoming well."
— Seneca**

TOP 10 GIFT IDEAS

Top health in mind? Consider:

1. A gift certificate for a health food store or healthy meal service.
2. A cooking class or nutrition consult.
3. Cookbooks with healthy recipes.
4. A fruit basket, fruit-of-the-month club membership or gift certificate for farm stand produce.

Top safety in mind? Consider:

5. A safety keychain. Some of these keychains feature window breakers, seatbelt cutters, personal alarms and flashlights.
6. A weather band radio — handy for stormy days and nights.
7. Vehicle breakdown kits. Include a thermal blanket, a gallon of water, a "help" sign or flag, flares, a flashlight and duct tape.

Top safety for children in mind? Consider:

8. A bathtub faucet protector. These come in cute animal shapes and protect a child from bumps on hard faucet fixtures.
9. A flashlight. These are available in many child-themed shapes and sizes.
10. A cool new bicycle helmet. Wearing a helmet while bike riding is a must.



3 Ways to Enjoy the Holidays



1. Slow down. Make time for yourself during your breaks and outside of work to just relax. Quality time with friends and loved ones doesn't have to be busy.

2. Get support. Talk to friends and family about your shiftwork schedule. Talk about ways holiday gatherings can work around your schedule, or start new traditions with your schedule in mind.

3. Plan and prepare. Simplify where you can and plan ahead. Your shifts may give you some time for errands outside of the crowds.

Shiftworker takeaway? Take a few minutes to rethink what a "perfect" holiday season means to you. When you focus on the simple things that you value most, you might be surprised at how much you enjoy the holidays this year.

End-of-Year Checkup



What can you check off on this list?

- I follow a schedule for routine screenings with my health care provider.
- I get at least 30 minutes or more of aerobic exercise five days a week.
- I do strength-building exercises two to three times a week.
- I make fruits and vegetables about half of what I eat at every meal and split the rest between whole grains and lean protein.
- I have reduced the amount of sodium and sugar in my diet.
- I don't use tobacco (or I am seeking help for quitting), and I either limit or don't use alcohol.
- I usually get 7 to 8 hours of quality sleep a day.
- I feel generally positive and hopeful.
- I have a network of friends for mutual support and fun.
- I relax and find quiet time most days.

If you checked most of these, great job! If you see areas you need to improve, ask yourself: "What's one new thing I can try today?" Make that one thing specific, such as "Walk at track on Tuesday" rather than just "Exercise more." **What can you do today?**