



BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. Spotlight

February 2020

Your EAP is a free and confidential service, which provides assessment and short-term counseling for a variety of mental health, substance abuse and work/life related issues. To learn more about your available benefits, contact your BHS Care Coordinator at 800.245.1150.



Mental Health and Your Heart

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Mental Health and Your Heart

From Valentine's Day to American Heart Month, February is about taking care of the heart. Heart disease is the #1 killer in the United States—of both men and women.

Stress can contribute to heart rhythm disorders (arrhythmias) such as atrial fibrillation. Some studies suggest that stress and mental health issues may cause your atrial fibrillation symptoms to worsen. High levels of stress may also be linked to other health problems. Coping with your stress is important for your health.

Women's hearts are affected by stress and depression more than men's. Depression makes it difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle and follow recommended treatment.

Manage your stress

Finding ways to manage your stress may help improve your health and manage your condition.

Some stress management ideas include:

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Relaxation techniques
- Support from family and friends
- Regular physical activity
- A healthy diet
- A positive attitude

If these stress management techniques aren't helping, talk to your doctor.

Depression and anxiety

There is a complex relationship between atrial fibrillation and anxiety and depression.

- Some research shows that people with atrial fibrillation may be more affected by depression and anxiety.
- Having depression or anxiety may negatively affect your quality of life and the severity of your atrial fibrillation symptoms.
- At present, researchers don't know whether people with anxiety or depression are more likely to develop atrial fibrillation or whether having atrial fibrillation increases the risk of anxiety and depression.

More research is needed to fully understand the complex relationship between atrial fibrillation and these mental health conditions.

If you have symptoms of depression or anxiety — such as persistent feelings of sadness or worry, difficulty concentrating, and loss of interest in most activities — talk with your doctor. He or she may recommend you see a specialist trained in mental health conditions (psychologist or psychiatrist) for diagnosis and treatment.

If you think you may need to speak with someone about your mental health, don't hesitate to seek advice. Call your BHS Care Coordinator for confidential assistance at 800-245-1150.



Take Action to Prevent the Flu

Workplaces offer many opportunities for people to interact. More interaction between people in close contact increases the risk for respiratory illnesses like the flu to spread. Preventing illness among employees can also support healthy and steady workplace operations.

Getting a flu vaccine every year is the best way to avoid getting seasonal flu. Besides the flu vaccine, there are other important actions you and your community can take to protect yourself and others from getting and spreading the flu.

These are called *nonpharmaceutical interventions* or NPIs. Examples of NPIs include staying home when you are sick and covering your coughs and sneezes. NPIs are especially important during pandemic flu outbreaks, when people have little or no immunity to a new flu virus and a vaccine is not yet available.

- What you can do personally: Stay home when you are sick. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands often.
- What communities can do: Implement social distancing interventions in schools, in workplaces and at events.
- What everyone can do to keep the environment germ-free: Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects like doorknobs.

COMMUNICATE WITH EMPLOYEES ABOUT FLU PREVENTION

Use staff training, routine workplace communications, and email announcements to encourage healthy workplace policies and behaviors. Encourage employees to do the following:

- Get a seasonal flu vaccination as soon as it becomes available in your area.
- Take everyday preventive actions, such as staying home when sick, staying home if exposed to someone else who is sick, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and washing their hands or using hand sanitizer.

Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as telephones, keyboards and doorknobs. Provide supplies that promote healthy hygiene, including tissues, soap and hand sanitizer.

FLU PREVENTION STEPS TO TAKE:

- STAY HOME WHEN YOU ARE SICK
- AVOID CLOSE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SICK
- COVER YOUR COUGHS AND SNEEZES
- WASH YOUR HANDS
- CLEAN SURFACES AND OBJECTS FREQUENTLY



Bring Play Back to Your Life

Think play is just for kids? Think again. In fact, it can have serious benefits for adults. Maintaining a sense of creativity and fun is linked with greater happiness across the life span. Plus, it is thought to contribute to resilience and healthy aging.

One possible reason: Taking a playful approach may equip you to better cope with the inevitable stress of life. One study of university students found that those who rated themselves as being more playful found the challenges in their lives to be more manageable.

It's normal to experience stress, but how you perceive that stress and what you do with it can have lasting impact. In the study above, the more playful someone was, the more likely he or she was to search for a silver lining when things didn't go as planned, a strategy called positive reframing.

There are different ways to be playful and have fun. Many people enjoy talking and relaxing with friends. Others enjoy physical activity, such as yoga or water aerobics. Researchers who study the benefits of play point out that it has more to do with your attitude than what you're actually doing: Things like living in the moment, or finding amusement in everyday details are both forms of play.

And while some people are naturally inclined toward playfulness, this skill can also be practiced and learned — just as a person can learn to be more grateful over time.

Ready to play and have fun? Here are some ways to get started:

- **Schedule time for a hobby.** Make time to do the things you enjoy. But make a point to find joy in the process, and not just focus on the end product.
- **Enlist social support.** Doing fun things with others is a key aspect of playfulness.
- **Play games.** According to one study, people averaged about 2,000 more steps a day when they started playing a mobile app game that used the device's GPS to find items. Or try racing people on the escalator while taking the stairs.
- **Visit a park or playground.** Getting out in nature can improve your mood and can be a fun social activity. And there's no such thing as being too old for playing outdoors.
- **Stop and smell the roses.** Playful people tend to be those who take the time to appreciate beauty in the world. Practice mindfulness and catch a snowflake on your tongue, notice the changing leaves and how they look, feel or smell this fall, or allow yourself to jump in a puddle during the next rain shower (rain boots optional).

RECIPE: Baked Salmon with Pesto & Pecans

- 4 salmon filets, 4 tablespoons store bought or homemade pesto (divided), 4 tablespoons crushed pecans (divided)

Preheat oven to 400°. Lightly grease baking sheet. Place salmon filets skin side down on pan. Spoon a tablespoon of pesto per filet and spread over salmon. Sprinkle about a tablespoon of crushed pecans over each filet.

Bake for 15 minutes or until salmon flakes easily when poked. Adjust the time according to the thickness of your fish. Serve immediately with your favorite vegetables.