

# STAYWELL



[www.intermountainpower.com](http://www.intermountainpower.com)

April 2011

Brian Coles, Health Analyst

Volume 225

## Health and Safety Day

The Fun Walk is scheduled for Wednesday, May 18, 2011. All spouses and shift workers are invited to participate by walking on site or at home. All participants will receive a T-shirt. Shirts are moisture wicking and available in a women's cut or men's/unisex design. Health and Safety Day activities will be conducted throughout the day.



## Stress Reduction Program

Often, after a series of rotating day/night shifts or working extended hours, fatigue and stress can increase. This year we are offering an Outage Fatigue Reduction Program. This simple program is to help you recover from the fatigue and stress brought on by the outage schedule.



This one-month-long program works by focusing on activities that aid recovery and reduce stress. Outages impact not only the employee, but his/her family as well. Because of that impact, this program is also open to spouses. Everyone who participates will receive a \$15 gift card.

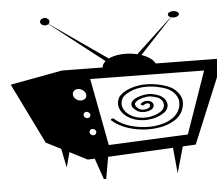
Here are some tips that can help with fatigue:

- If on shift work, keep a regular schedule and stick to it. Try eating breakfast at the same time each day, whether on night or day shifts. Go to bed at the same time after night shifts and stay on schedule with day shifts. Establish a set routine in preparation for bed: dim the lights, change



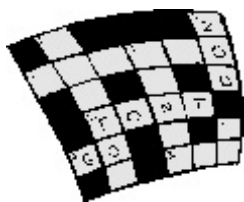
into pajamas, read, retire to the bedroom, etc. The more consistent the routine, the easier your body accepts the changes that can cause fatigue.

- Plan some relaxing activities that are not fatiguing or stressful. Too often we plan a big trip to relax and it has the opposite effect. A weekend getaway may be good, but a huge trip that takes a lot of planning, coordination, loading, and unloading reduces the benefit and creates more stress.
- Consider taking a day off during the week. To reduce stress when going on big vacations, plan them from Wednesday to Wednesday so you have two short weeks before and after.
- Be active in fun, relaxing activities such as golfing, biking, walking, gardening, or a favorite hobby. Avoid getting to the point of fatigue or the benefit is lost.
- Don't forget the mind. Reading is good, but intense studying can create more stress. Excessive computer work or staring at screens for long periods of time can lead to fatigue, but light surfing for 20 to 30 minutes in the evening may be relaxing.
- Avoid long periods of watching TV which adds to eye and muscle fatigue. Alternate between activities. Variety helps reduce fatigue.



## Healthy Brain

When my grandma was in her nineties and still living independently, we noticed she always had crossword puzzles, brain teaser games, and a Rubik's Cube sitting on the end table. One day I asked if that was for the family members and she said "No, I do them." She said it helped keep her mind healthy.



Sometimes it takes years for science to confirm what our ancestors have known for years. Recently, there have been numerous long-term studies that have verified this simple principle for the brain: "use it or lose it."

## Maintaining a Good Memory

Activities that stimulate the brain keep the chemicals in the brain reacting and communicating; therefore, they stay at higher levels and work faster.



Some rest homes are improving the aging mind with memory classes and activities. Many things keep the brain chemistry healthy and lower the chance of dementia. Proper

nutrition, physical exercise, stress reduction, and adequate sleep can help.

Reading more books, watching less TV, taking classes, and attending lectures all contribute to keeping the mind healthy. Learning new skills or improving current ones, playing board games, learning a foreign language, writing more letters or stories can also be helpful.

Studies have shown that 30 minutes of walking per day for six months can improve cognitive function.



All of the suggestions above can help, but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Using a holistic approach by combining mind stimulation activities, physical exercise, nutrition, and continued learning provides the greatest advantage in maintaining a clear, healthy mind and memory later in life.

## Rebuilding the Brain

What if we have already demonstrated some memory loss or inability to think like we used to? Can we rebuild the brain and restore lost function? YES!



Research indicates that even severe brain damage from injury or stroke can show improvement. Using electrical current to stimulate chemicals, when done in combination with occupational therapy, improves brain and muscle function. Studies have also shown that using gaming systems like Wii can improve fine and large muscle function following brain damage.

## Nutrition and the Brain

Proper nutrition not only helps restore damaged brain cells, but can also keep the cells and chemicals in a healthy balance. Such foods are referred to as *smart foods* and include richly colored fruits and vegetables that are high in antioxidants. Broccoli, peppers, carrots, tomatoes, blueberries, raspberries, oranges, and grapefruits are all good examples of *smart foods*. Other foods like potatoes, artichokes, beans, pecans, walnuts, ground cloves, and oregano help to keep the mind healthy. Spinach, nuts, eggs, breads, salmon, yogurt, liver, and tuna are foods rich in vitamin B<sub>6</sub> and B<sub>12</sub>, which keep the neurological system fit.

Electrolytes and staying hydrated are important. Electrolytes are minerals such as sodium, potassium bicarbonates, magnesium, chloride, and calcium.

While the foods listed above can increase brain function, others can slow it down. These include very high levels of calcium, copper, zinc, and a diet high in saturated fats. Such foods and minerals lead to decreased cognitive function in the short term, and over a lifetime can lead to early dementia, cognitive decline, and decay.

### Sources:

1. [www.yourmemorymatters.com](http://www.yourmemorymatters.com) How to Maintain Your Memory: Your memory matters. Retrieved 3/16/2011. & Antioxidants are Smart Foods : Your Memory Matters.
2. <http://touchmark.com/article.maintain-good-memory-old-age>. Rog Winningham, PH.D. How to Maintain a Good Memory Ability with Advancing Age.
3. American Heart Association (2010, February 26). Wii video games may help stroke patients improve motor function. From [www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com), Retrieved March 22, 2011.
4. [www.technologyreview.com](http://www.technologyreview.com). Repairing the stroke-damaged brain. June 24, 2009, Retrieved 3/22/2011.
5. Nbrain Foods: the effects of nutrients on brain function. Fernando Gomez-Pinilla. Nat Rev. Neuroscience. 2008 July; 9(07): 568-578.