

Oregon Military Department's



Stay Well Newsletter

May 2011

Welcome to our Agency's quarterly Health and Wellness Newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to provide you with health and wellness information and tips on a quarterly basis. As the agency's Health and Wellness Coordinator, I encourage you to participate by providing me with topics or ideas you may have as they relate to Health and Wellness. I will try to share some of that information with other employees within our agency through this link. Also, check out our new Health and Wellness page on the AGP website at <http://www.oregon.gov/OMD/AGP/health.shtml>

You can also contact me at 503-584-3581 or email me at Robin.M.Webb@mil.state.or.us.

UP COMING & CURRENT EVENTS



JOINT Training Classes (Federal, State & Contractors)

Fire Extinguisher Training

For anyone who is interested in learning how to operate a Fire Extinguisher, Salem Fire Department will be here on Tuesday, June 14th at 1:30 PM to provide free training. Training will commence in the FMS parking lot here at JFHQ. If you are interested in attending or have questions, please contact Robin at 503-584-3581 or by email at robin.m.webb@mil.state.or.us

Safety Committee Training

Due to our increase in workers compensation costs over the last several years, the Executive Safety Committee decided to institute a Safety Committee training class. This class consists of OSHA materials and review of OSHA Division One. All safety committee members are required to attend this training. One of the objectives of the class will be to review each Safety Committee's By-Laws and/or Charters. The class instructors are Marc Snook and Robin Webb. A list of training classes are as follows:

Location	Date	Class
JFHQ	July 12, 2011	Safety Committee
JFHQ	August 15, 2011	Safety Committee

Each class is currently scheduled from 8 AM to Noon, end time is really determined by the number of questions or concerns the class materials might raise. These classes are open to everyone so if you are interested in attending either classes or missed a class and need to make one up, please contact Robin Webb at 503-584-3581 or by email at robin.m.webb@mil.state.or.us

Employee Guide Training

This is a two hour presentation in which topics such as teamwork, customer service, stress, health, workplace violence and discrimination will be covered. This class is a great time for employee's to gather and share information for personal development and is open to everyone.

If you are interested in attending a class, log into ILearn or contact Paul Geck at 503-584-3815.

For other available training opportunities, check out iLearn. There are many online classes offered in the iLearn course catalog such as SAIF training, software courses for Microsoft Office, and other useful classes. Registering for classes through iLearn automatically updates your State Training Transcript which contains your list of training accomplishments. For more information and a list of classes, check out our website at <http://www.oregon.gov/OMD/AGP/Training.shtml> or contact Paul Geck in AGP at 503-584-3815 for more information.

FEDERAL Training Classes

For a current schedule of *Federal Technician* training, contact HR at 503-584-3839. For a current schedule of training for AGR's, contact DCSOPS at 503-584-3617.

Spring Brings Allergy Season

Spring is in the air. Literally, from weeds to spores to grass and tree pollens, the warm weather is almost here, driving airborne allergen levels through the roof. That means your [allergy symptoms](#) -- the sniffing, sneezing, and [itchy](#) eyes -- are in overdrive and apt to stay that way for months.

What can you do? WebMD asked some of the country's leading allergy experts to weigh in with answers to your top questions about [spring allergies](#). Here are suggestions for helping you find some much-needed relief this season.

There is a world of spring allergens out there. How can you possibly figure out which one is playing havoc with your eyes, nose, and throat? "The allergy skin test is the quickest, most inexpensive, and most accurate way to find out what you are allergic to, whether it's mold, grass pollen, or a type of weed," says Neil Kao, MD, an internal medicine physician specializing in allergy and immunology at the Allergic Disease and Asthma Center in Greenville, S.C. Talk with your primary care doctor or an allergist. Both can give you an [allergy test](#).

How can I manage my allergies using over-the-counter medication?

Spring allergy relief is within your reach -- on your local drugstore's shelves. "Start by taking an over-the-counter, non-sedating [antihistamine](#), such as generic [Claritin](#) or [Zyrtec](#), every morning. If your nose remains congested, add a saline nasal rinse or oral [decongestant](#) pill (if you don't have [high blood pressure](#)). You can also take a long-acting decongestant nose spray for a few days, if necessary. If these treatments don't clear your nasal congestion, ask your doctor about adding a corticosteroid nose spray," says Paul Enright, MD, WebMD's allergy expert and research professor of medicine and public health at the University of Arizona.

Other over-the-counter tools for managing your allergies are lozenges to soothe a [sore throat](#), which can be irritated by postnasal drip from your runny nose, and antihistamine eyedrops to relieve itchy, watery eyes.

Look for antihistamine on the label when shopping for eyedrops; these treat the root of your allergy symptoms, instead of eyedrops that just relieve the redness (also known as decongestant eyedrops). If you do buy the latter, be sure you don't use them for more than two to three days -- over time you will need more and more to relieve the redness.

Are nasal sprays really addictive?

The rumors are true: Some over-the-counter nasal decongestant sprays can be addicting if not used as a short-term solution. You want to find a nonaddicting nasal spray if you decide to use this product. "Over-the-counter nasal sprays are extremely effective, but they are also extremely addictive," says Jeffrey M. Factor, MD, an allergist and immunologist at the Connecticut Asthma & Allergy Center in West Hartford.

Your nose becomes dependent on the nasal spray and stops working the way it should when the spray is overused, he explains. This cause's rebound congestion -- meaning the [medication](#) loses power the more you use it. When the spray stops working, the congestion comes back with a vengeance. If you're hooked, prescription nasal steroids can help you kick the habit and improve your congestion during the spring allergy season.

How can you tell if an over-the-counter nasal spray might be long-term trouble? Check the label for a warning -- if it says "don't use the spray for more than three days at a time," pay attention.

Beyond medication, what can I do to manage my allergies?

First, think practically: Try to avoid your triggers altogether by keeping your windows closed, even on an inviting spring day. That's when allergen levels are at their peak. Next, take a shower after you've spent time outdoors. "After you come inside on a nice spring day, you are literally covered in allergens," says Kao. "You track it through your house, and worse, you get in bed covered with the pollen or grass spores that make you congested. Guess what? Now you are going to lie in it for eight hours and wake up feeling miserable."

Allergens such as pollen tend to stick to fabrics which means you can deposit allergens from your clothes on your furniture, on your pillow, and on the people around you. All of a sudden the safe haven of your home is as allergy-ridden as the outdoors. So wash your bedding, your pajamas, and your clothes as often as possible to rid them of troublesome allergens during the spring season.

Love the outdoors. How can I enjoy the warm weather with my allergies?

The trick to planting flowers or mowing the lawn on a pleasant spring day is not to treat your allergy symptoms, but to prevent them before they kick in. "Pretreat your allergies with an antihistamine about a half-hour before your day begins to avoid an allergy attack altogether and minimize your suffering," says Enright. And don't be caught unprepared. Be sure to have "rescue" medications such as eyedrops and decongestants on standby -- just in case

When do I need prescription allergy medication?

You've jumped through hoops to manage your springtime allergies. You started with an allergy test to pinpoint your triggers, you've kept a watchful eye on pollen counts to avoid outdoor activities when the numbers spike, you've been taking extra showers when needed and doing laundry nonstop, and you've tried several over-the-counter [allergy treatments](#). Your efforts, however, are not producing results, and you're still suffering from all the classic spring allergy symptoms. It's time to see your primary care doctor or an allergist.

"The next step is to try prescription-strength medications," says Kao. "Once you get started, you should have your allergies under control in just a week or two." Does this mean you can put your laundry soap away? Not quite, explains Kao. You still need to be vigilant in managing your allergies on your own, but now you can do it with prescription strength on your side.

Some of the prescription medications in your doctor's allergy war chest are:

Antihistamines, such as Claritin, Zyrtec (note: these two are the same formulations as the over-the-counter versions), and [Allegra](#), which block the release of histamine, a chemical that can cause redness, swelling, and itching.

Nasal steroids, including Beconase, [Flonase](#), Nasacort, Nasonex, Rhinocort, and Veramyst, which reduce inflammation and prevent and treat nasal stuffiness, sneezing, and itchy, runny nose brought on by seasonal or year-round allergies.

Leukotriene modifiers, such as Singular, which work by blocking the effects of leukotrienes, chemicals produced in the body in response to an allergen.

All of these medications should be used as directed by your doctor, who will talk to you about how often, for how long, and at what dose you should take your allergy meds.

Do I need allergy shots?

The same formula applies to prescription medications: If your allergy symptoms don't improve over time, the next step may be to take it up a notch with allergy shots. When you start the shots, generally given once or twice a week to begin, you'll probably stay on your prescription medicine to manage your symptoms. If you're like most people, by the time the next allergy season rolls around, you may have started to build up resistance and have milder symptoms. That's when allergy medications are like spare tires, explains Kao -- you use them only if you need them.

For more information on allergies, check out WebMD at <http://www.webmd.com/default.htm>

Employee Assistance Program

State Employees

As part of your benefit package through PEBB, is that you are eligible for the Employee Assistance Program through Cascade Centers. So, If you're struggling with a work or family issue, free **confidential** help is just a call away at 1-800-433-2320 or check out their website at

http://www.cascadecenters.com/index.php?tray=topic_inline_all&tid=top10532&cid=15

Here is a list of items they may be able to help you with:

- Marital or premarital problems
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Interpersonal issues
- Conflict at work
- Depression or Anxiety
- Stress management
- Family relationships
- Grieving a loss
- Financial, legal or consumer concerns
- Personal decision making

Free Legal & Financial Advice

Through Cascade, you can have an initial, free 30-minute office or phone consultation with an attorney or CPA on a legal or financial issue (up to three per year). And if the issue needs further attention, you can hire the professional at 25 percent off of his or her normal hourly rate.

Homeownership Savings

This is a **no cost, no obligation** program where you can receive **free** consultation on using this service and also take advantage of substantial savings. You can save up to 50% off closing costs when buying, selling or refinancing a home. Get discounts on lender fees, real estate commissions, home inspection and moving services nationwide. Call (866) 505-3244.

Child & Elder Care Resources

Cascade Center will round up information and resources for you on any child or elder care issue. Examples include infant-to-college-age resources on education, childcare, parenting and adoption. For elders, examples include such issues as housing, alternative living, home health, community services, legal concerns and access to medical care.

Identity Theft Recovery

Where do you turn if you think someone has stolen your identity? Turn to the Cascade EAP. They'll provide unlimited phone consultation for identity theft recover. They'll help you manage and contact credit, ATM and other banking accounts. They'll also help you in resolving credit problems that can result. And, they'll be a free referral resource for access to consumer hotlines, government resources and Identity Theft Insurance providers.

Crisis Counseling

A personal or family crisis can turn your world upside down in a second, and crises can come up at any time. That's why Cascade Centers offers crisis counseling 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The service is available to you and all your eligible dependents, even if they live outside the state. Just call (800) 433-2320.

Help for Busy People

The Cascade EAP offers information and resources to help today's busy people keep their minds on work. Call Cascade to find resources to make your life easier. Just call 1-800-433-2320.

Federal Employees

Military OneSource can help you 24-7 with such issues as Counseling, Money matters, Deployment and Spouse Employment. You can contact them Statewide at 1-800-342-9647, Overseas at 800-3429-6477 or you can also access them on the web at www.militaryonesource.com

Here are Some Great Tips on Stretching and Benefits

We all spend too much time in our jobs reaching, bending over, pulling, pushing or sitting at a desk everyday. Our Workers Compensation claims prove that point. Here are a few stretching exercises to get you through your day.



STRETCHES

DEVELOPED BY EXPERTS - FOR ALL AGE GROUPS - FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Benefits of Regular Stretching:

- Increases range of motion, reduces sprain-strain injury risks, and helps control postural fatigue
- Warms and prepares muscles, pre-fueling them with oxygen and other needed chemicals
- Reduces internal friction and stiffness involving muscles, tendons, joints, and ligaments
- Reduces soreness and fatigue from long-term sitting, driving, bending, or reaching
- Improves comfort and decreases fatigue related to physical exertion, lifting, using tools, and so on



BACK EXTENSION AND SHOULDER BLADE PINCH

This exercise provides great fatigue relief for the lower, mid, and upper back. Stand with feet apart and gently lean backward to the point of mild tension with the arms also reaching back and squeezed toward each other. Tighten shoulder blades and low back muscles and hold for five seconds. Do three times.



NECK FORWARD STRETCH

This stretches the back of the neck and the area where the neck joins the upper back. Tilt your head forward and lower the chin toward the chest, placing a hand on the back of your head for added stretch. Hold for 15 seconds.



NECK LEFT AND RIGHT

This stretches the sides of the neck and the area where the neck joins the shoulders. Tilt head sideways toward shoulder without twisting neck -- move the ear directly toward shoulder. Do this stretch once for 15 seconds on each side.



ELBOW PULLOVER (LATERAL TORSO STRETCH)

This stretches the sides of the neck and the area where the neck joins the shoulders. Raise one arm overhead, grasp it at the elbow with other hand, and lean sideways from the waist, stretching the side of the trunk. Hold for 5 seconds, alternating for 3 times on each side.



SHOULDER OVER (LATERAL SHOULDER STRETCH)

Raise one arm overhead, grasp it at the elbow with other hand, and pull the elbow gently across behind the head, stretching the muscles and soft tissues on the side of the shoulder joint and surrounding area. Hold for 15 seconds, and repeat for the other shoulder.



SHOULDER ACROSS (POSTERIOR SHOULDER STRETCH)

Hold one arm straight across the chest and gently pull its elbow in closer and farther across. Hold for 15 seconds to stretch the back area of that shoulder. Repeat for the other shoulder.



SHOULDER BACK (ANTERIOR SHOULDER AND CHEST STRETCH)

Stand with a stable shoulder-high object directly to your side. Extend the arm on that side to touch the object with your fingertips with arm straight. Gently rotate your entire body forward and away from the object while keeping fingertips in place on the object, stretching the front side of that shoulder. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat, facing the opposite direction in order to stretch the other shoulder.



BRIDGE STRETCH FOR ARMS AND UPPER TORSO

Interlace fingers with palms pointing toward the sky, straightening the elbows and reaching as far upward as possible with both hands. Hold for 15 seconds.



FOREARM AND WRIST STRETCHES

Extend one arm forward without bending the elbow. Bend the wrist upward, and use the other hand to gently pull fingers back toward you, stretching the muscles and soft tissues on the bottom of the forearm and wrist. Hold for 15 seconds. Then release and bend the same wrist downward, gently pulling it down and toward you with the other hand. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat both stretches with other arm.



HAMSTRING STRETCH

Tight hamstrings can be a source of soreness, and often cause back soreness as well. Stretch hamstrings by standing with feet crossed and gently bending forward at the hips and waist to the point of mild tension. You should feel this stretch along the back of the rear leg. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat with the other leg. Alternate version: place one foot up on a low object with knee straight and gently lean forward to stretch back of leg. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat with other leg.



QUAD AND FLEXOR STRETCH

Place one hand on a stable surface for support. Bend one knee to lift a foot up behind you. Bend forward and grasp that ankle with the opposite-side hand, and slowly stand back upright, gently pulling the leg upward behind you to stretch front of thigh (quadriceps) and upper thigh area (hip flexors). Hold for 15 seconds and repeat with opposite leg and hand.



CALF STRETCH

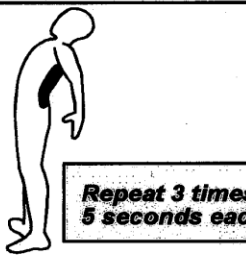
Stand at arm's length in front of a tall stable surface such as a wall or tree. Place both hands on the surface at chest level, and move one foot back about as far as your shoulders are wide. Push the rear heel all the way onto the floor or ground, and lean forward toward your hands to stretch the calf muscles and tendons on that leg. Hold for 15 seconds and repeat for the other leg. This stretch can also help relieve heel discomfort.

STRETCHES

DEVELOPED BY EXPERTS - FOR ALL AGE GROUPS - FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Do these quick stretches regularly to reduce fatigue and avoid injury:

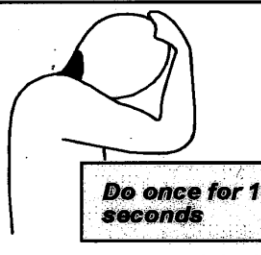
1



Repeat 3 times,
5 seconds each

BACK EXTENSION

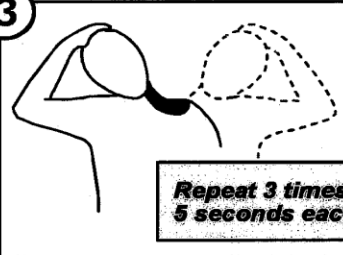
2



Do once for 15
seconds

NECK FORWARD

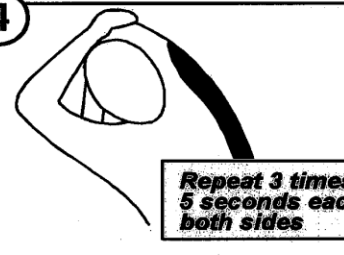
3



Repeat 3 times,
5 seconds each

NECK LEFT & RIGHT

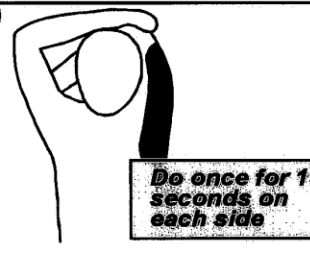
4



Repeat 3 times,
5 seconds each,
both sides

ELBOW PULLOVER

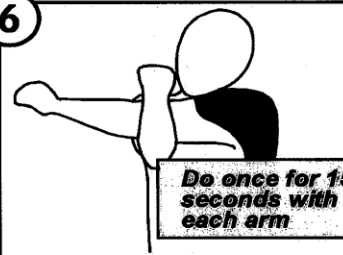
5



Do once for 15
seconds on
each side

SHOULDER OVER

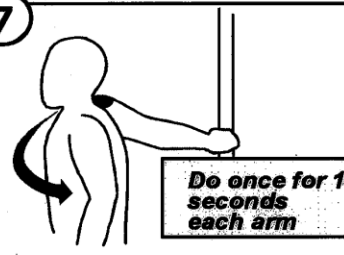
6



Do once for 15
seconds with
each arm

SHOULDER ACROSS


7



Do once for 15
seconds
each arm

SHOULDER BACK

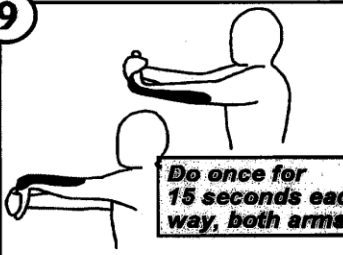
8



Do once for 15
seconds

BRIDGE STRETCH

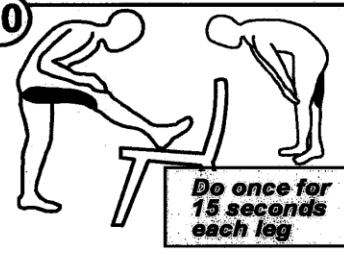
9



Do once for
15 seconds each
way, both arms

FOREARM & WRIST

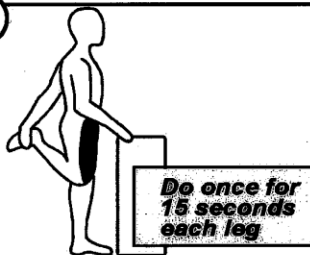
10



Do once for
15 seconds
each leg

HAMSTRING STRETCH

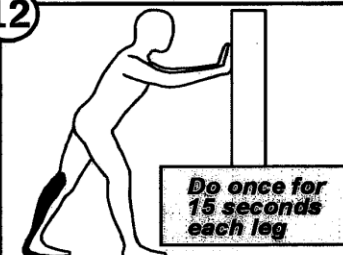
11



Do once for
15 seconds
each leg

QUAD & FLEXOR STRETCH

12



Do once for
15 seconds
each leg

CALF STRETCH

© 2005 Barbre Ergonomics Check with your physician before starting a new exercise program or if you have had recent joint trouble, muscle problems, or surgery

Pack a Picnic That Won't Pack on the Pounds



It's that time of year that we all look forward to -- the time for backyard barbecues, picnics, and outdoor parties. Eating outdoors is just more fun -- and it doesn't have to be unhealthy.

Think beyond fried chicken and potato salad. Those traditional summertime favorites may be easy to tote, but they are also loaded with fat and calories. There are plenty of ways to whip up cool and easy dishes that won't wreak havoc on your eating plan.

Salads and Sides

Salads are a welcome part of any picnic. If you love mayonnaise-based salads, try using light mayonnaise mixed with fat-free or light sour cream to reduce calories. Add flavored mustards, pickle relish, or extra veggies to "kick it up a notch." Try adding chunks of seafood, chicken, or turkey to pasta or green salads for entrées that don't require you to slave over the hot grill. And check out this yummy [pasta pesto salad recipe](#).

Dress green and vegetable salads with vinaigrettes that are heavy on the vinegar and light on the oil. Vinegars such as sherry and balsamic add wonderful flavors, especially if you prepare the dish ahead of time and chill it for several hours before eating.

Baked beans were always part of family menus; make them part of yours, too. Beans are a great source of fiber and are quite nutritious as long as they're not doctored up with too many extra calories. Our "Recipe Doctor," Elaine Magee, uses low-fat kielbasa for flavor in this healthy [bean recipe](#).

Simple raw vegetables like baby carrots, grape tomatoes, broccoli, jimaca, and celery are easy to take along for a crunchy and satisfying side dish or appetizer.

Hot off the Grill

Burgers are a perennial summertime favorite. As long as you use lean ground beef, you can still have your favorite food on a bun. You can also enjoy low-fat versions of hot dogs, bratwurst, and sausages (but don't forget your portion control). Skinless chicken breasts and seafood of most any kind are among the leanest options for the grill. Marinate them, or brush on a honey-mustard glaze for a delicious treat hot off the grill.

Vegetables on the grill are another taste delight. I love to marinate veggie kabobs or slices of red peppers, mushrooms, and squash and throw them on the grill for a great side dish or appetizer.

Just Desserts

What kind of picnic would it be without a watermelon? The red, juicy fruit is the perfect picnic dessert; it's very low in calories, and now comes in the new smaller, personal size. Fruit salads, fruit kabobs, and bowls of grapes or cherries also make refreshing, sweet, and nutritious finales to a healthy picnic.

Angel food cake with fresh berries and light whipped topping (freeze a container and put it in the cooler) is another alternative that everyone loves and is reasonably low in calories.

But steer clear of chocolate -- it melts in the heat!

Drink Up

Take along plenty of cold drinks for outdoor picnics. Water, unsweetened iced tea, lemonade (you can even make it with artificial sweetener or reduce the sugar), 100% fruit juice, and low-calorie soft drinks are great refreshers. I love to take a variety of fruit juices, sparkling water, and wedges of lemon, lime, and orange to combine in creative and thirst-quenching ways.

Smoothies are another great option you can now buy in individual containers at the grocery store. Just be sure to check the label and make sure the one you choose isn't sky-high in fat and calories.

Remember that not only do alcoholic beverages tend to have plenty of calories; they can go right to your head in the summer heat. So be careful, especially if you are a designated driver.

Keep It Safe

Follow these tips to make sure your picnic foods stay out of the danger zone, where bacteria thrive and can cause illness:

- Start with a clean cooler.
- Keep drinks and food in separate coolers.
- Place coolers in shady areas outdoors, and keep in an air-conditioned car on the way to the picnic site.
- Pack coolers tightly with cold food and ice packs; a full cooler will stay colder longer.
- Pack raw meats on the bottom so they don't drip on other foods.
- Keep lids of coolers closed as much as possible.
- Put cooked foods on clean platters.
- Don't let food sit out for more than two hours.
- Take along moistened towels or waterless soap to keep hands clean.
- Do not use the cooler to chill room-temperature foods.

Ready, Set, Go!

With just a little planning, it's easy to pack a picnic that won't weigh you down. So put on your sunscreen, and don't forget to pack one more thing before you hit the park -- some sports equipment to encourage your gang to play softball, throw the football or Frisbee, fly a kite -- whatever sounds like fun. A picnic is a great chance to fit in some physical activity, followed by a relaxing and nutritious *al fresco* meal.

PEBB Weight Loss Sponsors



Did you know that if you are enrolled in a PEBB sponsored medical plan from Kaiser Permanent, Providence Choice or Regence BlueCross BlueShield, that you qualify for no-cost participation in Weight Watchers?

It's no secret that overweight and obesity are major risks for arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses. In a recent survey, a majority of PEBB members reported they are overweight or obese. That means more than 23,000 employees are at risk for chronic illness. Your Benefit Board asked the medical plans to provide assistance for members to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Therefore, in 2009 PEBB medical plans chose Weight Watchers to provide a weight management program at no cost to employees. Their decision was based on the following criteria the Board set for program selection:

- Access to program services by 90 percent of covered employees
- Services at worksite or other option during scheduled work hours
- Online alternative to services during non-work hours or at other locations
- Services provided in the community
- No requirement that participants purchase products, such as special meals
- Unlimited participation (enrollment outside of plan) through dues payment only

If you are interested in joining Weight Watchers, check out the PEBB website for more information at www.mypowwr.com/downloads/PEBB.pdf

State Employee Insurance Plans

<p><u>Public Employees' Benefit Board</u> 1225 Ferry St SE Salem, OR 97301</p>	<p>E-mail: Eligibility and Enrollment E-mail: Comments (503) 373-1102, fax (503) 373-1654</p>
Medical Plans	Dental Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaiser Permanente 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaiser Permanente
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providence Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEBB Statewide Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willamette Dental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VSP (Vision Service Plan) 	
Mail-order Prescriptions	Optional Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaiser Permanente 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UnumProvident
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walgreens 	Other Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellpartner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (800) 433-2320

Federal Employee Information



TriWest Health Care Alliance: For questions about enrollment, eligibility, benefits, authorizations and claims. Call: 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378). Their hours of operation are Mon-Fri 8:00am - 6:00pm, All US Time Zones.

http://www.triwest.com/corporate/contact_us.aspx

TRICARE: For questions about benefits, etc., you can call 1-800-600-9332 or go on line at <http://www.tricare.mil/contactus/>

2011 Fitness Discounts

Here are some links to fitness discounts provided through both Providence and Kaiser health plans for state employees:

Medical Plan	Discounts
	<p>Kaiser Permanente offers fitness discounts to members through its contract with the CHP group. Members can also save money on nearly everything active, healthy and fun. Click here for CHP offerings.</p> <p>Member can find information on the corporate fitness discount on the CHP site: http://chpactiveandhealthy.com</p>
	<p>PEBB Statewide and Providence Choice plan members can access discounts to fitness clubs, yoga classes, pilates studio, cycling shops, and more through the LifeBalance Program.</p> <p>Members must identify themselves as LifeBalance members and show Providence Health Plan insurance card at participating location to receive discount.</p> <p>Go to: lifebalanceprogram.com or call 503-234-1375 or 1-888-754-5433</p>

[Workplace Cited as a New Source of Rise in Obesity](#)



Workers on an assembly line at a Ford plant in Highland Park, Mich., in 1913. Modern work tends to be more sedentary. To the right, women sorting rice grains in a factory, the kind of labor-intensive work now in decline.

Looking beyond poor eating habits and a couch-potato lifestyle, a group of researchers have found a new culprit in the [obesity](#) epidemic: the American workplace.



A sweeping review of shifts in the labor force since 1960 suggests that a sizable portion of the national weight gain can be explained by declining [physical activity](#) during the workday. Jobs requiring moderate physical activity, which accounted for 50 percent of the labor market in 1960, have plummeted to just 20 percent.

The remaining 80 percent of jobs, the researchers report, are sedentary or require only light activity. The shift translates to an average decline of 120 to 140 [calories](#) a day in physical activity, closely matching the nation's steady weight gain over the past five decades, according to the report, [published Wednesday in the journal PLoS One](#).

Today, an estimated one in three Americans are obese. Researchers caution that workplace physical activity most likely accounts for only one piece of the obesity puzzle, and that diet, lifestyle and [genetics](#) all play important roles.

But the new emphasis on declining workplace activity also represents a major shift in thinking, and it suggests that health care professionals and others on the front lines against obesity, who for years have focused primarily on eating habits and physical activity at home and during leisure time, have missed a key contributor to America's weight problem. The findings also put pressure on employers to step up workplace health initiatives and pay more attention to physical activity at work. "If we're going to try to get to the root of what's causing the obesity epidemic, work-related physical activity needs to be in the discussion," said Dr. Timothy S. Church, a noted exercise researcher at the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge, La., and the study's lead author. "There are a lot of people who say it's all about food. But the work environment has changed so much we have to rethink how we're going to attack this problem."

The report shows that in 1960, one out of two Americans had a job that was physically active. Now it is estimated that only one in five Americans achieve a relatively high level of physical activity at work. Dr. Church notes that because the research does not factor in technological changes, like increasing reliance on the Internet and e-mail, many people in service and desk jobs that have always involved only light activity are now moving less than ever, meaning the findings probably understate how much physical activity has been lost during work hours.

While it has long been known that Americans are more sedentary at work compared with the farming and manufacturing workers of 50 years ago, the new study is believed to be the first in which anyone has estimated how much daily caloric expenditure has been lost in the workplace.

"It's a light bulb, 'aha' moment," said Barbara E. Ainsworth, the president-elect of the American College of Sports Medicine and an exercise researcher at Arizona State University. "I think occupational activity is part of that missing puzzle that is so difficult to measure, and is probably contributing to the inactivity and creeping obesity that we're seeing over time." For years, the role that physical activity has played in the obesity problem has been uncertain. Numerous studies suggest there has been little change in the average amount of leisure-time physical activity, posing a conundrum for researchers trying to explain the country's steady weight gain. As a result, much of the focus has been on the rise of fast-food and soft drink consumption.

Other studies have suggested that changing commuting habits, declining reliance on public transportation and even increased time in front of the television have played a role in the fattening of America. But none of those issues can fully explain the complex changes in nationwide weight-gain patterns.

Some earlier research has hinted at the fact that workplace physical activity is associated with weight and health. One seminal set of studies of London bus drivers and conductors showed that the sedentary bus drivers had higher rates of heart disease than the ticket takers, who moved around during the workday.

Dr. Church said that during a talk on the country's obesity patterns, he was struck by the fact that Mississippi and Wisconsin both had high rates of obesity, despite having little in common in terms of demographics, education or even weather. It occurred to him that both states had waning agricultural economies, prompting him to begin exploring the link between changes in the labor force and declines in workplace physical activity.

He quickly discovered that a decline in farming jobs alone could not explain increasing obesity around the country, and began exploring job shifts over several decades. Using computer models, Dr. Church and colleagues assigned metabolic equivalent values to various job categories and then calculated changes in caloric expenditure at work from 1960 to 2008.



Less physical activity during mostly sedentary workdays accounts for one piece of the obesity puzzle, researchers say. "You see the manufacturing jobs plummet and realize that's a lot of physical activity," Dr. Church said. "It's very obvious that the jobs that required a lot of physical activity have gone away."

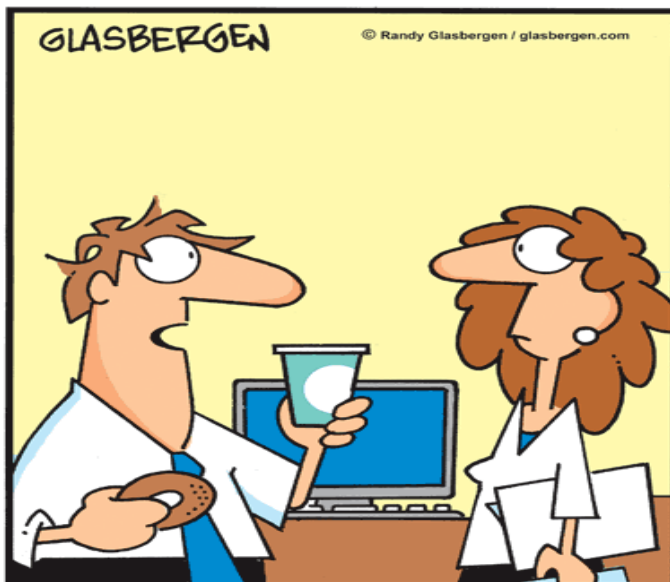
Ross C. Brownson, an epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis, said that both health professionals and the public needed to broaden the traditional definition of physical activity as something that occurred during planned exercise, like running or working out at the gym.

"We need to think about physical activity as a more robust concept than just recreational physical activity," said Dr. Brownson, whose 2005 report on declining physical activity in the workplace is cited in the PLoS One report. "In many ways we've engineered physical activity out of our lives, so we've got to find ways to put it back into our lives, like taking walks during breaks or having opportunities for activity that are more routine to our daily lives, not just going to the health club."

Researchers said it was unlikely that the lost physical activity could ever be fully restored to the workplace, but employers do have the power to increase the physical activity of their employees by offering subsidized gym memberships or incentives to use public transit. Some companies have set up standing workstations, and marketers now offer treadmill-style desks. Employers can also redesign offices to encourage walking, by placing printers away from desks and encouraging face-to-face communication, rather than e-mail.

"The activity we get at work has to be intentional," Dr. Ainsworth said. "When people think of obesity they always think of food first, and that's one side of it, but it's high time to look at the amount of time we spend inactive at work."

Quarterly Funnies



**"It's easy to snack healthy at work!
I get Vitamin C from coffee, Vitamin D
from donuts, Vitamin B from bagels..."**



**"The company revoked all our benefits, cancelled our
retirement program, and fired half of the workforce.
So we're having Funny Hat Day to boost morale."**