



conscious Breathing

Spring 2007 Newsletter

President's Address:

Well spring has finally arrived and renewal and positive energy is waking us all from our winter hibernation! Spring has brought laughter and joy to the IHMS staff. At our last staff meeting it was really hard to get down to business due to the energy and fun in the room. We are as busy as ever thanks to all of our loyal customers. We have several upcoming events that we want to make sure you are aware of.

The first is that our educational focus for this spring is to learn how to breathe consciously. Have you ever realized how many times you hold your breathe during the day? Do you realize that if you stopped for even 4 minutes the brain could no longer function? Lucky for us, our creator didn't leave breathing up to us or that too would be something about our health that we might neglect! Read the article on conscious breathing and you might not only stay alive, but actually *feel* alive as well.

The Body Mechanics have once again been chosen to have a relay team in the Burlington City Marathon. Remember, we are not seasoned runners, but usually begin training in January as a goal to promote company health. Thanks to my wonderful husband Chris, who will be running the beltline, I will not be the oldest or the only one over 40 running on our team. Erica and I switched legs so that she will be running the first leg (3.5 miles) and I will be running the last leg (5.6 miles). Amy and her boyfriend Chris Lavellette will be running the 3rd and 4th legs again. We are hoping to get our time below 4:00 hours this year, but some of us will need to step it up as our fastest runner, Phil Warner, is on his way to Afganistan this year to protect our country. Keep Phil in your prayers and come down to the Waterfront in Burlington on May 27th to cheer us on!

We also have a new class in our Training Center. The class is **Stress Prevention and Management**. The focus is on recognizing risk factors within your organization that cause workers stress, and then coming up with a comprehensive plan to address the risk factors. I have been working with Neil Jepson, MS, PC, to design the class, but I will be teaching the first class and Neil will be teaching the second class. Neil will also be available to work with companies starting in June to help you develop and initiate your plan as well.

IHMS has now been in business for over 4 years. We would like to thank all our loyal customers for helping us to keep growing, expanding and making IHMS a successful Vermont company. We couldn't do it without you.

-Louise Lynch, President

How would you like to have more energy at the end of your day? Does your body heal slowly from injuries? Looking for the fountain of youth? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then "Conscious Breathing" is the answer!

Conscious Breathing is exactly what it sounds like, *be conscious*, or aware of how you are breathing. Why is this important? The body's musculature reacts to the stimuli from the environment in every moment. It determines if the stimuli are dangerous and whether the body should flee or fight. All of the muscles prepare to do so, even if the logical mind tries to override the response. So the initial reaction prepares the muscle for activity with an involuntary contraction.

The diaphragm is your number one breathing muscle. It connects to the lower ribs from front to back and also your low back. In order for you to breathe in, the diaphragm contracts and flattens into your abdomen, which creates a negative pressure to allow the air to move deep into the lungs. When the diaphragm relaxes it moves up into the chest creating a pressure that helps move the air out of the lungs. Therefore, pressure in the abdomen or a lot of fat in that area, can increase the pressure and limit the diaphragm's ability to move into the abdomen. This creates *shallow breathing*. Also, mental stress or holding your breath under physical stress, like in heavy lifting, can tighten the diaphragm and lead to shallow breathing. Notice how many times you hold your breath, you will be amazed and it's no wonder you are tired and worn out!

Know these important facts about breathing: Men breathe 12-14 times per minute and woman 14-15 times. Breathing above 15 times per minute is a stress signal to your brain to initiate a "*fight or flight*" response. This causes all your muscles to prepare and puts hormones into your body that can be harmful to the heart and other organs if it occurs too often. Also, your breath is responsible for removing 70% of the body's toxins. The lower 1/3 of your lungs has the most amount of blood flow to carry the oxygen you breathe to the body. If you breathe shallow or constantly hold your breath as the world *assaults* you, then you will have less oxygen going to your body and a build-up of toxins that drain your energy. **Breath is the life force!**

So what do you do? Be aware of how many times you hold your breath. You should be breathing in slow and deep down into your belly. The belly should come out as you breathe in to a count of 4 seconds through your nose and the belly should come back in as you breathe out to an 8 second count through slightly opened lips. Also, anytime you are under a stressful situation, whether physical or mental, just focus on breathing out because when you have breathed all the *bad air out* completely, new air comes in as soon as you relax. You'll be amazed at how alive and good your body feels by increasing your awareness of the life force -breathing!!!

If you would like more information, contact our office. We teach this program to individuals with injuries and within companies in a group setting. You'll be amazed at the results.

Featured Company

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

Ever noticed the smell of roasting coffee near exit 10 on I-89? That's because Waterbury is the home of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, our featured company this quarter. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (GMCR) has been roasting coffee since 1981. They started in a small café in Waitsfield, Vermont and have since become one of the nation's leading specialty coffee companies. GMCR grew from that small local coffee roaster to one that provides not only wholesale coffee, but also a mail order portion that allows people to get coffee and related products delivered to their homes. This growth in business also caused an increase growth in employees.

GMCR and its employees work following several leading principles, one of which is providing workers with a Vibrant Workplace, which they define as: A place where you can make a difference in the world. GMCR endeavors to create and maintain a culture that fosters teamwork, fun, personal growth, career paths, financial rewards and a healthy work-life balance. As a means of helping employees reach the goal of a healthy work-life balance, GMCR started working with IHMS in 2003 when we started offering PBM services and plant walkthroughs with job coaching as needed. Since 2003, there has been increased interest in providing more wellness programs at GMCR and IHMS has worked to help develop baseline data measurements to assess the effectiveness of various departmental stretching programs that have been developed in conjunction with the providers of yoga and meditation services at GMCR. Re-assessment of both subjective and objective baseline criteria indicate that all employees participating in the departmental stretching programs notice a positive impact in their health and well being as a result. It is not unusual to see groups of employees outside performing their stretches on a nice day!

Here's what employees have to say about the programs provided at GMCR (which also include workstation assessment and ergonomic assessments):

"It helps me feel like I won't get hurt. It's part of a healthy lifestyle. Clearly, the people that don't stretch are on light duty. They are more likely to get injured."
J. Winauski

"To have the support of our organization to implement healthy activities like proactive workstation evaluations for the employees is a win, win, win. The company has healthier employees, the employees learn about healthy opportunities (on paid work time) and are shown how valuable they are to the company, and I get to feel like a hero because I am able to facilitate all of this. IHMS works with us to make sure the work stations fit the job. In addition, they have partnered with our yoga instructor and our meditation instructor to give measurable results of employee wellness in the areas of flexibility. Baseline testing, appropriate stretches and movement for the job, and then retesting a few months later to see the measurable success. WOW!"
Betsy Stanford, HR Specialist – Wellness

Nutrition Corner

Meal Planning

- Clean out your refrigerator
- Go through grocery ads to see what is on sale
- Go through your recipe box or cookbook and choose 5 to 10 recipes you know you can make and your family likes
- Start a shopping list planning around what you already have
- Plan only 5 meals a week
- Be flexible, don't hold yourself to cooking a certain meal on a certain night

Other Nutrition Tips:

Stock up on sale items and items like spaghetti sauce, cheese, taco shells, noodles, onions, potatoes, garlic, tuna, and rice. These items can make a lot of meals. Cook and freeze meals ahead of time. Balance color, temperature, and texture when planning a meal to include different types of food and make the meal more interesting. Buy seasonal produce and visit your local farmers market whenever possible.

2nd Annual Food Drive

We are proud to announce our 2nd Annual Food Drive to benefit the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf during the month of June. We will be sending out information on May 22nd.

If your company would like to get involved in helping the food shelf during the difficult summer months please call Martha at 802-655-7575 or email her at Martha@ihmspt.com.

Thank you so much for joining us in helping to ease the burden on some families when it comes to meal time.

In Conclusion

If you enjoyed this newsletter why not share it with someone you know? To be added to our newsletter mailing list or to receive an electronic version in a word format, please call Bridget at 802-655-7575 or e-mail her at Bridget@ihmspt.com. The next newsletter will be out in July, until then have a wonderful spring!

Best Regards,

Louise Lynch, PT
Kim Fuller, PT
Charles Alexander, OT
Penny Bolton
Mike Lynch

Erica Galipeau, PT
Chris Herskowitz, PT
Amy Benson, PT
Martha Burroughs
Bridget Mientka