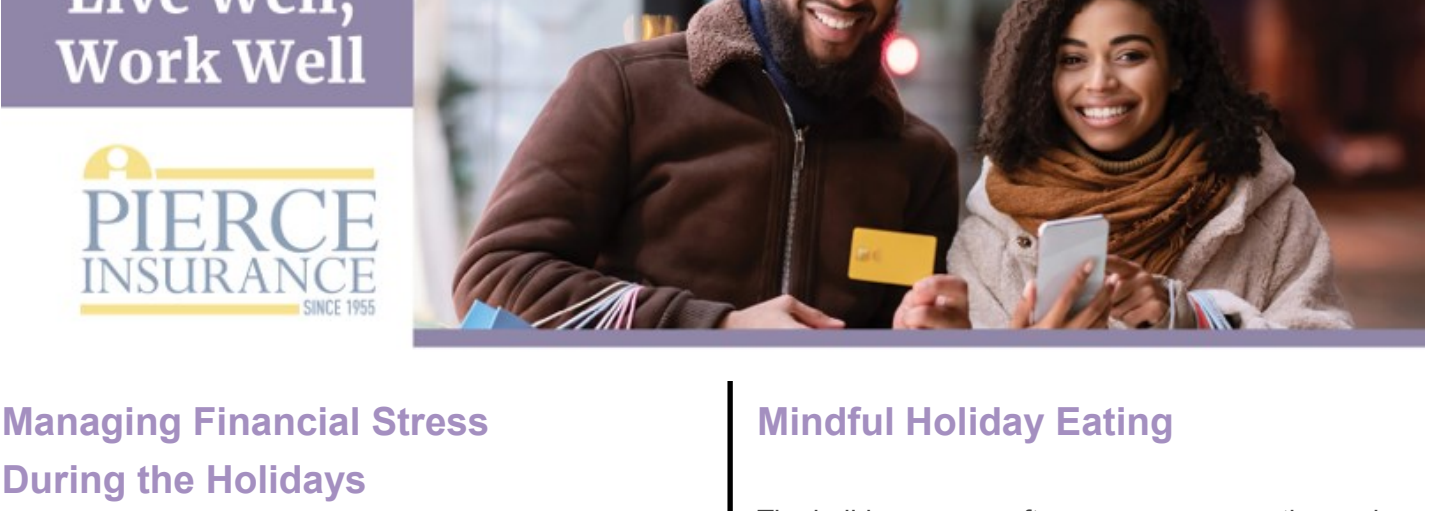


Employee Newsletter & Resources

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month

As the holidays approach, it's time to gather with loved ones to share food and gifts. Sometimes well-intentioned gifts can come with unforeseeable risks. It's important to be aware of toys that may harm those you're giving them to.

December is National Safe Toys and Gifts Month. With the holidays right around the corner, now is the time to think about a gift before you give it. Tips for selecting appropriate toys include checking labels for age ranges; avoiding toys with small parts that can injure, be swallowed or cause blindness; and ensuring toys are labeled as nontoxic.



Managing Financial Stress During the Holidays

If the holiday shopping season stresses you out, you're not alone. Research by financial services company Bankrate revealed that more than half (54%) of holiday shoppers expect to feel financially burdened this holiday season as they anticipate overall high costs.



While American consumers no longer face inflation levels like last year's holiday season, they are still concerned about costs. Bankrate estimates that 87% of holiday shoppers plan to use at least one money-saving strategy, such as:

- Buying fewer items
- Seeking out more coupons or sales
- Starting holiday shopping earlier
- Purchasing cheaper brands
- Making gifts or crafts
- Obtaining more used or secondhand items

Financial anxiety and stress can be debilitating. Consider these Bankrate tips for managing holiday-induced financial stress and anxiety:

- Discuss low-cost ways to celebrate with family and friends.
- Get comfortable with saying no to additional spending.
- Establish a realistic holiday spending budget.
- Make shopping lists.
- Download apps for rewards, discounts and cashback.
- Practice mindfulness when you're feeling stressed.
- Find joy and practice self-care.

If you're feeling significant stress, consider talking to a mental health professional for guidance and support.

Mindful Holiday Eating

The holiday season often means more parties and gatherings—and an abundance of festive food and drinks. However, practicing mindful holiday eating can help you savor the season without overdoing it. This healthy approach encourages focusing on preparing and consuming food in a distraction-free environment. Thinking about the food may make you more aware of your hunger and fullness cues. Mindful eating offers physical and mental health advantages, such as:

- Better body cue recognition
- Overeating prevention
- Healthier food choices
- Stress reduction
- Weight loss

Mindful eating doesn't mean avoiding eating your favorite holiday foods. It's simply about bringing more awareness and enjoyment to your food. Also, focus on the social aspect of gatherings and engaging in meaningful conversations. By practicing mindful holiday eating, you can enjoy the season and create lasting memories. Contact a dietitian if you need guidance with mindful eating.

Your Mindful Eating Checklist

☐ Honor your hunger and satiety cues.

☐ Limit distractions while eating.

☐ Use all five senses while you eat.

☐ Take small bites and chew slowly.

When's the Best Time to Work Out?

A new study published in the journal Obesity explored the best time of the day to exercise to gain health benefits. Findings suggest working out between 7-9 a.m. is best for weight management. Morning exercisers had a lower body mass index and waist circumference than those exercising later in the day.


Although this new research highlighted the best time of day to work out, it's important to note that exercising at any time of the day is beneficial. Health experts say better sleep, mental health, brain health and physiological health are also important benefits of exercise. In the end, consistency is key with exercise. The type of exercise or when it's being done isn't as important as consistently getting in 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity and two days of strength training activities. As always, talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise regimen.


Take Charge of Your Health


Self-advocate at the Doctor


Many individuals struggle to get the health care they deserve. Advocating for yourself can help your health care provider understand your needs and expectations. It involves taking action to ensure you get the necessary time and attention from your doctor. Self-advocacy takes practice and is critical to increasing your health literacy.


Consider the following tips for advocating for yourself at the doctor's office:

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Practice what you want to say.
You may have better results with your doctor if you practice what you want to say ahead of time. Think about your primary concerns and how you want to express them to your doctor.
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Bring a friend.
Having an extra person at your appointments can provide comfort and support if you feel frustrated or overwhelmed. They also offer a second set of ears and can take notes for you.
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Ask questions.
It's crucial that you understand your care. You may find it helpful to write down your questions ahead of time, as many people forget them when they're speaking to their doctor.
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Prioritize a follow-up plan.
Ensure there's a plan for further care. If you have new medication, make sure you understand how to take it and for how long. Additionally, you can ask if there are any symptoms that mean you should contact your doctor sooner than planned.
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Consider a second opinion.
Remember that you have the right to a second opinion. If speaking to your doctor has left you unsure or uncomfortable, consult other physicians to learn about alternative ideas or approaches.



Healthy Habits That Can Lower Your Risk of Depression

A recent international study published in the Nature Mental Health journal found that certain lifestyle factors can reduce the risk of depression by 57%. This study, which examined data from nearly 290,000 people over a nine-year period, found that there are seven lifestyle factors associated with a lower risk of depression, and sleep was at the top of the list.

The study found that getting between seven and nine hours of sleep each night could reduce the risk of depression, including single depressive episodes and treatment-resistant depression, by 22%. Furthermore, the study revealed that participants with the lowest genetic risk for depression were 25% less likely to develop depression than those with the highest genetic risk, representing a much smaller impact than lifestyle factors.

The seven lifestyle factors that were linked to lower rates of depression included the following:

- Limiting alcohol consumption
- Keeping a healthy diet
- Engaging in regular physical activity
- Maintaining a healthy sleep schedule
- Avoiding smoking
- Minimizing sedentary behavior
- Having frequent social connections

Adopting a Healthy Lifestyle

You can reduce your risk of depression and boost your mental and physical health by altering your lifestyle. This may include eating a diet that's high in lean proteins and vegetables, reducing your alcohol intake and getting 60 minutes of physical activity each day.

Additionally, you can encourage healthy sleeping habits by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, avoiding caffeine and nicotine before bed, putting your technology away prior to bedtime and ensuring you have a dark, quiet place to rest.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the previously mentioned study, you can reduce your risk of depression and boost your mental health with healthy lifestyle choices, such as getting adequate sleep and eating nutritious foods.

Preventing Burnout With Boundaries

Burnout is a chronic form of work-related stress, resulting in a state of physical or emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of accomplishment. Left unaddressed, burnout can lead to fatigue, frustration, substance misuse, increased vulnerability to disease and insomnia. Fortunately, you can combat burnout by setting boundaries.

Overworking is one of the most common boundary problems contributing to burnout. This can lead to mental, physical and emotional fatigue, and is not sustainable over the long term.

Burnout is especially common among people pleasers or perfectionists, as these individuals are more likely to sacrifice their well-being to meet certain goals or impress their supervisors. It is also common among individuals who have a heavy workload, struggle with work-life balance and feel they have limited control over their work.

Setting boundaries is crucial to prevent and reduce burnout. This refers to the act of setting limits for others regarding how you're willing to be treated and what tasks you're willing to do. Specifically, setting boundaries can help you assert your needs and rights and prevent you from being mistreated.

Consider the following practices for setting boundaries at work:

- Reach out to your boss or manager if you need more time to complete an assignment.
- Ask for help if you begin feeling overwhelmed.
- Close your office door or schedule meetings with yourself to avoid unnecessary interruptions.
- Stand up for yourself if you see a fellow employee taking credit for your work.
- Speak to your boss or the HR department if you need help handling your workload or managing a workplace relationship.
- Understand what's included in your job responsibilities and what isn't.

Setting boundaries can help you reduce the risk of burnout and foster a healthy, sustainable working environment

Applesauce Pancakes

December 2023 Recipe

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 1 cup applesauce
- ¼ cup nonfat instant (dry) milk powder
- 1 cup water
- 2 eggs
- 1 Tbsp. canola oil
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- 2 tsp. baking powder

Nutritional information for 1 serving

Calories	249
Total fat	4 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Cholesterol	55 mg
Sodium	202 mg
Carbohydrate	46 g
Dietary fiber	2 g
Total sugars	12 g
Added sugars included	6 g
Protein	7 g

Directions

1. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the applesauce, dry milk powder, water, eggs and oil.
2. Add the flour, sugar, cinnamon and baking powder.
3. Stir until the mixture has only small lumps.
4. Place a large skillet on medium-high heat.
5. Spray the skillet with nonstick cooking spray.
6. Pour ½ cup of batter onto the skillet.
7. Turn each pancake when bubbles form on top of the batter.
8. Cook the other side for about one minute or until golden brown.