

# Health and Wellbeing Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2016 Health and Wellbeing Newsletter. Since the last newsletter the Health and Wellbeing Forum have met and are currently reviewing a number of proactive training programmes, designed at raising awareness and providing practical support and advice. In this edition read our useful tips on reducing your daily intake of sugar, the return of the Stay Safe in the Sun campaign and a reminder of the smoking cessation programme. Don't forget to check the wire for more advice.



## ADDICTED TO THE SWEET STUFF!



We consume approximately a third of our daily calorie intake while at work. What we eat and drink affects not just our health but our work performance too. If we don't eat regular well-balanced meals or drink enough water, we may get headaches, feel sluggish or have difficulty concentrating. Whether you buy your lunch or bring your own there are usually plenty of healthy lunch options available. Bringing in your own lunch is great because you know exactly what's in your lunchbox and it will also save you money.

Foods with high sugar content are generally high in calories and low in essential nutrients. Eating a diet of sugary foods can lead to weight gain and more serious health complications such as the development of type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease and some cancers. Sugars are found naturally in most foods, however many products have added sugar. It is the added sugar that we should try to reduce or avoid.

Recommended daily sugar consumption for anyone over 12 years old should not exceed 30g daily, roughly seven sugar cubes. When you think that a can of coke has nine cubes and a blueberry muffin five, it wouldn't be long before you reach your limit!

Sugar content is displayed on food labels under many different names such as glucose, sucrose, honey, fructose, maltose and syrup. Change for life has developed an app that can be downloaded onto all smart phones called the 'Sugar Smart App'. The app allows you to scan food products in supermarkets to show sugar content as well as providing health and dietary advice. This quick and easy to use. Other practical tips to cut down on excess sugar consumption include reducing consumption of fizzy drinks, diluting concentrated fruit juices and stop adding sugar to cereals and hot drinks. For further advice read more on [www.nhs.gov/livewell/pages/livewellhub.aspx](http://www.nhs.gov/livewell/pages/livewellhub.aspx)

## CUT IT OUT!

NIE Networks is keen to support anyone who wishes to 'kick the habit' – the benefits of stopping start immediately and continue for a long time, as long as you don't start smoking again:

- ✓ Within 8 hours, nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood reduce by half
- ✓ Within 24 hours, carbon monoxide and nicotine are cleared from your body
- ✓ Within 48 hours, your ability to taste and smell is improved
- ✓ Within 1 year, your risk of having a heart attack falls to half that of a smoker
- ✓ Within 5 years, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker, in most cases
- ✓ Within 10 years, your risk of dying from lung cancer is half that of a smoker

There are a number of ways you can begin the journey to a smoke free life. You can make an appointment with your GP; call into your local pharmacy and obtain free NRT products and support or visit [want2stop.info/quitkit](http://want2stop.info/quitkit) and order your free 'Quit Kit' online. We ran a 'Quit Smoking Campaign' in 2015 across a number of locations through the Public Health Agency. There is a minimum requirement of 10 volunteers per location to run a programme. If you would like to request a programme and have the minimum number of volunteers required please contact any of the Health and Wellbeing forum members or email [anna.mcwhirter@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:anna.mcwhirter@nienetworks.co.uk)

### Read what's inside!

- 2** Focus on your wellbeing with a look at mental resilience.
- 3** Learn more about the Stay Safe in the Sun campaign and what activities our staff have been getting up to!
- 4** Enter our fantastic competition to win a cycle helmet and see how you can take simple steps to improve your posture.

## GIVING YOU THE TOOLS TO COPE

If you have ever envied anyone who lets stress and pressure wash over them, now is the time to discover how they do it. The fact is, some of us are more resilient than others, while others simply recognise the warning signs of pressure much earlier. If you are aware of such signs, you will find you are able to effectively employ mental coping strategies to help you deal with the circumstances where pressure is too high.

People can experience stress as a result of their life becoming out of balance. If that's you, then read some of our tips for enjoying a more balanced life:

- Delegate or share your responsibilities
- Learn to be more assertive – say 'no'
- Participate in regular exercise
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet rich in fruit and vegetables
- Never take on more than you know you can cope with
- Listen to music
- Take frequent breaks
- Schedule time for YOU



Once you admit that you are not able to control everything you will be better equipped to handle unexpected situations. Stress management ultimately comes down to finding ways to change your thinking and manage your expectations.

## FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING



To further improve coping skills and overall wellbeing we are developing a half day Personal Resilience training programme for employees which will be delivered later this year. To register your interest please contact Julie Henderson on [Julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk) or 07799867809.

If you need further welfare or counselling support contact Clarity Associates on 028 867 68674 or by emailing [jpssthompson@btinternet.com](mailto:jpssthompson@btinternet.com)

## SWEETS FOR MY SWEET!

Think all treats need to have a high sugar content - think again! My Raspberry Ripple from Aussie sugar-free pioneer Sarah Wilson is a social media favourite - try it for yourselves! The ingredients are available from all good supermarkets on you can order them online.

### Ingredients

50g frozen raspberries  
40g shredded coconut or coconut flakes for a chunkier version  
75g coconut oil  
80g salted butter  
2 tablespoons raw cacao powder or cocoa



### Method

Line a dinner plate or baking tray with baking paper (a dinner plate is ideal as the slight indent creates a good shape). Scatter the berries and coconut on the plate or baking tray. Melt the oil and butter in a saucepan or in the microwave - the oil will take longer to melt so add the butter a little after.

Stir in the cacao powder and syrup. Pour over the berries and pop into the freezer for 30 minutes until firm. To serve, either break into shards or cut into wedges.

## ARE YOU UP FOR A CHALLENGE!



Running has many benefits both physical and mental. The Couch 2 5K programme lasts for nine weeks and each week you will have two coached sessions (by fully qualified UK Athletics coaches). If you have decided to take on this challenge you are making a commitment to become more active. This is a positive step for your health but making a change like this will require effort and dedication. To register go to [www.activeni.org](http://www.activeni.org) and you will find out more information and a programme in your area. This programme is based on the very successful NHS Couch to 5k. For information and fitness tips visit [www.nhs.gov.uk/livewell/c25k/pages/couch-to-5k.asp](http://www.nhs.gov.uk/livewell/c25k/pages/couch-to-5k.asp)

## STAY SAFE IN THE SUN!

Following the success of last year's Stay Safe in the Sun Campaign, the Health and Wellbeing Forum are pleased to announce that we will once again be encouraging field employees to protect their skin and put a bottle of high factor sunscreen into their van.

Sunscreens will not protect us completely from sun damage on their own but they can be useful for protecting the parts of the skin we can't shade or cover. Always use sunscreens together with shade or clothing to avoid getting too much UV exposure.

Follow a few simple precautions to protect your skin from harm during the summer months.

- Spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm or if you do have to be outside, ensure you are covered up
- Make sure you never burn. If you have fair or freckled skin, you are more at risk of skin damage
- Aim to cover up with a T-shirt, hat and sunglasses
- Always use factor 15+ sunscreen and apply before going outside.
- Use plenty and make sure it has at least 4 stars UVA protection.
- Report mole changes or unusual skin growths to your GP
- Reapply sunscreen regularly - it can be easily rubbed or sweated off.



It's not just your skin which needs protection from the sun. Protect your eyes if you are out and about in the sun as long-term exposure to sunlight linked increases the risk of a type of cataract and is also linked to pterygia, growths on the surface of the eye.

Sunglasses can offer protection although not all sunglasses are adequate. When shopping for sun glasses, choose a pair that has either the CE Mark and British Standard (BS EN ISO 12312-1:2013), a UV 400 label or a statement that the sunglasses offer 100% UV protection.

NIE Networks offers field employees wraparound tinted safety glasses, which can be used comfortably with visors. Contact your local Stores for more information.



★ To request a bottle of high factor sunscreen for your van please contact your team manager. ★  
 For further information staying safe in the sun visit the Sunsafe pages at [nhs.co.uk](http://nhs.co.uk)

## MUD GLORIOUS MUD!



At NIE Networks, a bit of mud doesn't scare us! The popularity of mud runs and obstacle courses is rising and in June, 17 intrepid adventurers from Campsie will be replacing the safety boots for trainers to take part in the Hard As Oak 10k obstacle race! Ailish McLaughlin is organising NIE Networks' participation at the event and aims to raise money for charity, as well as raising the fitness levels of our staff! "I've been involved in these types of events with other members of staff and it is great fun. A few of us recently participated in the Mud Madness course in Portadown. There's a real sense of teamwork and while they are competitive, the focus is on getting fit and enjoying the day." Contact Ailish if you would like to get involved or if you would like to support their nominated charities, The Foyle Hospice and the Sperrin Ward in Altnagelvin Hospital.

## POSTURE, POSTURE, POSTURE!

Are you currently slumped in your chair, legs crossed looking down at your screen? Bad posture can lead to pain in the neck, back, shoulders, legs and feet, as well as referred pain in the head. It can add to stress and fatigue and in the long term it can cause serious musculoskeletal disorders. Luckily you can change your bad habits and develop good posture if you follow the right advice. First thing to note is that good posture is not just about sitting up straight. In fact it is more about being supported in a good position.

Below are some common causes of bad posture and some associated solutions. Follow these tips to improve your posture and don't forget to take regular breaks and move.

- Do not perch on the front of your seat. Sit back in your chair. If you need to re-arrange your workstation to be comfortable then do so. Do not slouch incorrectly as this results in the loss of the inward curve in the lumbar spine, causing excessive strain on the lumbar discs, instead move your chair closer to the desk and maintain contact between your back and the seat back.
- Your legs should be supported correctly whilst seated. Do not let your feet "dangle", cross your legs, or be tempted to raise your legs so they are supported on the heels or ankles.
- If when sitting with your arms in the correct position and you do not have good foot support, try a footrest. If your knees are higher than your hips, raise the desk and chair height.
- Your shoulders should be in a relaxed position whilst you work. Armrests can help by providing support, however if too high they can cause raised shoulders and if too low cause leaning.

No matter how well the workstation is designed, problems may arise where work organisation is poor or disrupted. Working at a computer often involves few changes in body position. This lack of movement can lead to muscular aches and pains. Something as simple as standing up and walking around your chair or desk can help break up repetitive tasks.

### Neck Exercise

1. Drop head slowly to one side, taking ear towards shoulder until stretch is felt.
2. Hold for slow count of 10.
3. Repeat 3 – 5 times.



### Shoulder Stretch Exercise

1. Raise shoulders towards ears until slight tension felt across top of shoulders.
2. Hold for slow count of 10.
3. Repeat 3 – 5 times.



### Stretches for back

1. Interlace fingers and lift arms above head, keeping elbows straight.
2. Pressing arms back, slowly stretch to one side.
3. Hold for slow count of 10.
4. Repeat 3 – 5 times to each side.



### Back Exercise

1. Hold right arm with left hand just above elbow.
2. Gently push elbow towards left shoulder until stretch is felt
3. Hold for slow count of 10.
4. Repeat 3 – 5 times to each side.



Short training seminars for industrial/field employees will be taking place at a number of locations during Autumn 2016. These will provide useful advice on back care and posture along with guidance on how to minimise back problems from aches, pains and injuries. If you wish to attend one of these seminars please register your interest by emailing [julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:julie.henderson@nienetworks.co.uk) or telephone 07799867809.

## COMPETITION TIME!

The Gran Fondo will once again tour Northern Ireland and for all cycling enthusiasts, whether you're an experienced cyclist or it's something you're thinking of taking up as part of your exercise regime, we're giving you the chance to win a Force cycling helmet thanks to Brownfield Bike Repairs and Restoration in Bangor.

Simply tell us who won Giro d'Italia 2015?

Send your answer to [Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk) and you could be a winner!



## We want to hear from you!

Got some health tips to share, protein smoothie recipes or a new health article you've found online?

Share it on our new Health and Wellbeing Blog in the Knowledge Centre on the wire or email [Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk](mailto:Julia.Carson@nienetworks.co.uk).