



Employee Wellness News

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Ask Wellness: To Stretch or Not to Stretch, That is the Question...

Question: "I've heard conflicting advice about stretching before a workout. I usually do some light stretching of my quads and hamstrings before a jog, is this right thing to do?"

Answer: Most people think that stretching before a workout is beneficial and can prevent injury. But it turns out that just the opposite is true. Many of us learned our training techniques as high school athletes when our coaches led us through several minutes of static (holding a stretch for 10-30 seconds) stretching. But it turns out that stretching *before* a workout can actually increase your risk of injury and that stretching, especially the large muscles in the legs, can decrease muscle strength by about 30% for up to 30 minutes after stretching. Instead of pre-exercise stretching, an appropriate warm-up will improve performance and reduce the risk of injury. The warm-up should literally warm the body by increasing temperature and blood flow. This allows muscles, tendons and joints to perform better. A proper warm-up requires no more than 5-10 minutes of aerobic activity at low to moderate intensity. It is perfectly acceptable to warm-up doing the same activity as you will do in the workout - just at a slower pace. For those who want additional dynamic stretches, please [click here](#) for some ideas. Save the stretching for after the workout and pay special attention to those muscles worked hardest during exercise.

No Thanks, I Think I'll Stand

If you're like millions of Americans you probably spend 6-8 hours (or more) seated at work every day. All that sitting could be very bad for your health, even if you exercise regularly. Recent research found that men and women who reported spending more than six hours per day seated had an 18% and 37%, respectively, increased risk of death when compared to those who sat for three hours per day. Even if you have a desk job, you can reduce your risk by sitting less. Take standing and walking breaks frequently throughout the day, even brief periods of standing, walking or stretching every 20-30 minutes throughout the work day reduce your risk. Read this [blog](#) for tips to move more at work.

If You Suffer From Back Pain, Massage May Provide Relief

A new [study](#) published this week in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, found that patients suffering from chronic low back pain experienced significant improvements by undergoing 10 weeks of relaxation or structural massage therapy. This is good news for those with low back pain as massage is a non-invasive, inexpensive (and enjoyable) treatment. Mercer Wellness is pleased to have a massage therapist in the Macon area who provides discounted massages to Mercer employees. [Contact us](#) for details.

The Eyes Have It

A lot has changed since the 1970s, including our vision. Neuroscientists estimate that since 1970, the incidence of nearsightedness has doubled in our population. The key contributor to this dramatic increase may surprise you: too much time inside. Nearsightedness typically develops in children of school age. Since the 1970s, children have spent significantly less time playing outside and this has led to an increase in vision problems. To reduce your child's risk of developing nearsightedness, encourage them to spend more time outside (ideally, two hours). While the mechanism is not completely understood, doctors suspect that the effect of bright light on the pupil forces the eye to focus more clearly and sends a stronger signal to the retina.



Recipe of the Month **Grilled Portobello Roasted Red Pepper and Mozzarella Sandwich/Burger Recipe** (click on burger for details)



This month's Healthy Recipe is...

Grilled Portobello Roasted Red Pepper and Mozzarella Sandwich/Burger Recipe

makes 4 sandwiches

4 large portobello mushrooms
2 tablespoons olive oil
1-2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning
salt & pepper
4 Kaiser rolls or burger buns or 8 slices of any other loaf bread
2-4 tablespoons mayonnaise (or some roasted red pepper hummus)
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
4 slices beefsteak tomato
4 slices fresh mozzarella (or whatever cheese you like)
4 large pieces of store bought, jarred roasted red pepper
1 cup salad leaves or lettuce of your choice



Heat an outdoor grill to 400f.

Wipe the mushrooms clean. Using a spoon, scrape off the gills from the mushrooms. Whisk together olive oil, vinegar, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Brush the olive oil and vinegar mixture all over the mushrooms.

Place the mushroom caps on the grill and grill about 2-3 minutes on one side. Flip the mushroom caps, and grill another 2-3 minutes. (If you like your cheese melted, place cheese slices on portobello caps (gill side) after you have flipped them). Remove grilled mushrooms to a plate, and cover to keep warm. If you are not using an outdoor grill, broil the mushrooms in the oven; about 3-4 minutes (or till browned a little) per side.

Cut the bread roll in half. Spread some mayonnaise or hummus on both halves. Sprinkle some basil on top. On the bottom half of the bread rolls, arrange the grilled Portobello mushroom, tomato slice, mozzarella slice, and roasted red pepper. Top with lettuce or salad greens. Place the other bread slice on top. Secure sandwich with a toothpick. Serve with a side of soup or salad (or try some of those great Terra chips!).