



# The Safety Zone

The Newsletter of the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust

## news & notes

### IMPROVING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

Therapist and author Marianne Clyde says providing employees with good quality mental health training is not just beneficial for employees, but it also helps businesses. Clyde points to research suggesting that happy employees are more engaged and more productive than other workers. University faculty members who meditated showed improvements in memory related to a reduction in stress, as well as better moods and better attention spans.

Most managers recognize the need to provide such support to employees, but many companies do not offer it. Talk to your manager about instituting mental health support. Here are some mental health improvement ideas you can propose:

- Ask your employer to provide a room and breaks for meditation.
- Share a book that addresses ways to improve mental health on the job.
- Encourage gratitude by keeping a small notebook at your desk to record things for which you are grateful.
- Ask your employer if they can provide exercise tracking devices or gym memberships to help reduce stress.
- Ask your employer to provide a list of reputable therapists to share with employees who may

## Health and Safety Tips for Shift Workers

*Things you can do to stay healthy and safe*

On dark, winter mornings, it can be difficult to pull yourself out of bed. But, for shift workers, sleep disruption can be a daily challenge. Working while your body wants to sleep has been linked to a variety of health issues, especially for those who change shifts. Shift workers typically sleep less than others, and the resulting drowsiness on the job can pose major safety risks. Reduced concentration, decreased motivation, and slower reaction times can increase the risk of accidents and injuries.

If you're a shift worker, here are some things you can do to stay healthy and safe:

- Take scheduled breaks to walk around and stretch.
- Take extra safety precautions while working irregular shifts.
- Don't operate heavy machinery, drive, or handle hazardous materials if you feel drowsy. Let your supervisor know if you don't feel alert enough to take on a task.
- Try diversifying your tasks to remain alert and attentive.
- Make sure you have good lighting, are working in a comfortable temperature, and have proper ventilation.
- Don't rely on caffeine to stay alert. Coffee and other caffeinated drinks are not a substitute for sleep.



- Eat a balanced and nutritious diet. Bring fresh fruit or other healthy snacks to work for evening and overnight shifts.
- Maintain good sleep hygiene by learning about how to make the most of your daytime sleep hours, such as keeping the room dark and going to sleep at the same time every day.

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## 'Tis the Season for Colds!

Contagious employees risk infecting others when they come to work while sick. According to a new study published in the November issue of the *American Journal of Infection Control*, even when they're sick with flu-like illnesses, 4 out of 10 health care professionals (HCPs) still show up at work. Of the 1,914 HCPs surveyed, 414 reported influenza-like illness (ILI). Of these, 183 – or 41.4 percent – reported working for a median duration of 3 days while experiencing ILI symptoms.

And the health care industry isn't the only one with workers coming to their jobs sick. According to a recent National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International survey, 26 percent of all workers in the United States admit to going to work when they are sick. The majority of these workers indicate the major reason they still come in when under the weather is because of workload. Of these workers, 42 percent have deadlines or are afraid they will have too much work to make up if they take a sick day, while 37 percent say they can't afford to be sick and miss work.

According to NSF International, the best thing you can do to protect yourself is take defensive measures during this and all winter seasons. Whether you are currently sick or healthy, prevent the spread of germs and bacteria by washing your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Using hand sanitizer is a good idea when you do not have access to running water, but it is still not a replacement for proper handwashing.

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## Got News?

Do you have news that needs to be circulated or have a subject you would like for us to address? Let us know by emailing the newsletter editor at [tcreel@arkhospitals.org](mailto:tcreel@arkhospitals.org).

AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust Program is administered by Risk Management Resources (RMR), a division of BancorpSouth Insurance Services, Inc. [www.bxsi.com](http://www.bxsi.com). In March 2003 the AHA Workers' Compensation Self-Insured Trust was established. The program provides workers' compensation coverage to AHA members.

Risk Management Resources, the administrator for the program, assists members in the areas of claims management, safety and loss control. Tina Creel, President of AHA Services, Inc., is the Group Manager of the Trust and provides oversight of the day-to-day operation of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees provides oversight of the overall operation of the Group Trust.