

Inspire

Monthly newsletter | June 2021

Ideas to inspire better health.

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 **TELUS**
Health

TELUS Health stands in solidarity with Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc, the Secwépemc Nation, the survivors and intergenerational survivors of residential schools.

This news is a tragic reminder of the discrimination faced by First Nations, Métis and Inuit people across Canada.

We will continue to listen and learn from Indigenous leaders and communities, acknowledge our biases and actively demonstrate our commitment to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action.



How to help ourselves and each other feel better now.

By Dr. Beth Donaldson, Family Physician and Medical Director, TELUS Health Care Centres

The COVID-19 pandemic added fuel to a fire that had already been burning in many households and in workplaces across Canada: chronic stress.

While stress (the result of hormones surging through the body) is a normal response to circumstantial pressures or demands, chronic or prolonged stress is neither normal nor healthy.¹ It increases our risk of mental and physical health problems like anxiety and depression, substance use problems, sleep problems, pain, gastrointestinal problems, a weakened immune system, difficulty conceiving, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and stroke.²

A close cousin of prolonged stress is burnout — a state of being at the brink of mental exhaustion — which is defined by the World Health Organization as a syndrome resulting from chronic stress that has not been successfully managed.³

Unfortunately, burnout has become a normal state for many as a result of unrelenting stress triggered by the events of 2020 and 2021.

According to a recent survey⁴ of 1,500 employees in 46 countries that analyzed the state of burnout and well-being during COVID-19:



89%

said their work life was deteriorating.



85%

said their well-being had declined.



55%

said they couldn't balance their home and work life.



2%

rated their wellbeing as excellent.

It's not difficult to understand why we're feeling this way. But we can take steps to help ourselves and each other feel better now.

For one, it used to be much easier to separate our work and personal lives when we actually got on a bus or in a car and travelled to and from our workplaces. For many Canadians, the current state of working is now so technologically efficient, you can pick up your job from anywhere — at the end of your run while stretching on a park bench, while dropping off your kids to soccer practice, or at home while the rest of the family is watching a movie. This new level of connectedness has been super beneficial in allowing us to work remotely, but it has also been super threatening to our internal and external homeostasis.

When we are not acutely aware of this double-edged sword, many of us are taking the path towards burnout. And as we look to a post-pandemic future, individuals and employers need to understand that the effects of our chronic stress are likely to last longer than the pandemic itself.

Here are some strategies for families to consider implementing at home and employers to consider establishing at work to support Canadians during their stress recovery:

1. Practice empathy and compassion.

Whether at home or at work, try to have compassion for yourself and others. This process is not always intuitive, nor is it easy. When you feel your heart rate rise, a grimace start to form on your face, or your jaw starting to clench, notice that it's happening and be curious as to why your body has responded in this way. Extend the same compassion to your colleague, partner, child or neighbour when they react to a situation in a challenging way.

It can help to say to yourself: “_____ is doing the best they can during this pandemic.” (That includes the person who just cut you off at the stop sign). Pausing to be mindful, in everyday occurrences, can help reduce the mental and physical stress often carried throughout the day.



2. Normalize talking about mental health at home and at work.

People tend to learn best from mentors who practice what they preach. As an employer or manager, strive for work/life balance, practice mindfulness, compassion and empathy in your actions, and others will often model the same behaviours. If you see a colleague or a friend who may be struggling, sit down and see what's going on in their world, and let them know that you are there for them. That, in itself, goes a long way. If you're comfortable, you can also offer to help direct them to a [trusted healthcare professional](#) or [virtual care provider](#) for support.

3. Reduce the workload.

I speak with many patients who are under extraordinary circumstances, and therefore extraordinary stress, professionally and personally. Of course, there are endless reasons for soldiering on: if they just hold on a bit longer until so-and-so is hired, or until they seal this one last deal, or until their child finishes high school, or until they pay off the mortgage...

But as we wait for those things, life (and often opportunity) may be passing us by. Be open to doing less. Not just at work, but in your personal life as well. Consider reaching out to a [mental health professional](#) or a life or career coach to help get you back on track. Asking for help is often the first and most important step in any recovery.

4. Prioritize connection with friends and family.

This can be a tough one, because it takes everyone in the family being on board in order to restore peace at home. But I encourage you to sit down as a family each week and prioritize what's going to be on the agenda. Can any tasks be removed? Have you left white space in the calendar for having meaningful conversations with each other? Do you have time to do nothing?

It's important to prioritize people outside of your home who mean a lot to you, too. Schedule time throughout your week to reach out to colleagues, neighbours or friends; consider delivering a homemade treat or meal or putting a card in the mail. Acknowledging someone you care about can help improve their day/week/month/year, and it can also help to ease your stress by promoting feelings of gratitude. Try to remember to be generous with yourself and those around you who matter most.

[Learn more about our mental health services](#)

1. CAMH. "Stress Overview." Accessed April 2021. 2. CAMH. "Stress Overview." Accessed April 2021. 3. World Health Organization. 2019. "Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases." 4. Moss, J. "2021. "Beyond Burnt Out." Harvard Business Review.



Toast 2.0

A humble slice of toast provides carbohydrates for energy and fibre for fullness, but it's easy to elevate your morning slice to a restaurant-worthy meal. Simply add layers of colour and texture to bolster its nutritional power with healthy fat and protein.

Here are 10 interesting combinations to try for breakfast, lunch or dinner:

Hummus + greens + balsamic vinegar drizzle

Cream cheese + sliced cucumber + salt

Mashed avocado + sliced tomatoes + chili flakes

Almond butter + apples + cinnamon

Peanut butter + banana + chocolate chips

Yogurt + berries + maple syrup drizzle

Sliced hard boiled egg + grated cheese + sliced mushrooms

Ricotta cheese + sliced roasted beets + fresh basil

Havarti cheese + mustard + sliced pickles

Canned baked beans + crisp greens

[Learn more about our nutrition services](#)



Eight myths that may be increasing your low back pain.

By Kosta Ikonomidou, Physiotherapist, TELUS Health Care Centres

Low back pain is the leading musculoskeletal complaint worldwide.⁵ Naturally, people often seek out answers to find relief — but the search often yields unhelpful results. In fact, misinformation about back pain can lead to more pain, disability, time off work, and medication overuse.⁶

Here are some common myths about low back pain that may be inhibiting your ability to feel better:

Myth 1: Low back pain is usually a serious medical condition.

Persistent back pain can be very distressing, but it's rarely a life-threatening condition. Less than 1% of cases in primary care are due to specific spinal pathology.⁷



Myth 2: Low back pain will become persistent and deteriorate in later life.

Aging does not cause back pain, and the research supports this:⁸ Staying active, managing stress, and eating a healthy, balanced diet can help protect against back pain at every age.

Myth 3: Persistent low back pain is always related to tissue damage.

Your back is strong. If you have had an injury, the tissue healing time is around three months. If pain persists longer, it often means that there are contributing factors to the pain. If you have experienced waking up with low back pain or pain after a simple movement, the onset may be related to increased tension, stress, poor sleep, fatigue, inactivity, or activity you're not used to.⁹ These factors may make your back more sensitive to pain, which triggers a protective pain response that is not necessarily due to damage.¹⁰

Myth 4: Scans are always needed to detect the cause of low back pain.

Scans rarely show the complete cause of back pain.¹¹ It's important to note that when you get a scan, your report will note any present disc bulges, arthritis, degeneration, etc. — however, scans of individuals without pain can often reveal issues like these too.¹²

Myth 5: Pain related to exercise and movement is always a signal to stop or modify the activity.

When pain persists past three months, the surrounding muscles become more sensitive to touch and movement. When you move and feel pain, it's a byproduct of how sensitive your surrounding structures have become and not necessarily how much "damage" there is. It's normal to feel some discomfort when you start to move and exercise again after an injury. And it's very important to remind yourself that you are safe and gradually increase your activity with the support of a professional.

Myth 6: Lower back pain is the cause of weak core muscles, and we must brace our core at all times.

Constantly bracing the core can be counterproductive: it can signal to your brain that you need to protect an injury, which can trigger an unwanted pain response. Working with an experienced physiotherapist can help make sure your body is well-supported.

Myth 7: Repeated spinal loading results in 'wear and tear' and tissue damage.

The same way that exercise and resistance training make your muscles stronger, moving and loading the spine makes the back stronger and healthier. Activities like running, twisting, bending and lifting are safe if you start gradually and practice regularly. Our backs are actually one of the strongest structures in our bodies.

Myth 8: Pain flare ups are a sign of tissue damage and require rest.

Pain flare ups can happen unexpectedly, but they are often not related to tissue damage. Common triggers are lack of sleep or poor sleep, stress, tension, low mood, inactivity or unaccustomed activity.

Managing these triggers can help prevent exacerbations. If you do experience a flare up, it's important to stay calm, move within your tolerance, and work with a physiotherapist if you can.

Learn more about our physiotherapy services

Show your pride.

June is Pride Month in Canada. At TELUS Health, we believe that honouring the diversity of our team, patients and communities leads us to new perspectives, strengthening our ability to help create remarkable health outcomes for Canadians.

We are standing up to help end discrimination of LGBTQ+ communities through listening, education, action and allyship.

Learn more about our pride initiatives



5. Wu, Aimin et al. "Global low back pain prevalence and years lived with disability from 1990 to 2017: estimates from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017." *Annals of translational medicine* vol. 8,6 (2020): 299. doi:10.21037/atm.2020.02.175
6. O'Sullivan PB, Caneiro J, O'Sullivan K, et al Back to basics: 10 facts every person should know about back pain *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020;54:698-699. 7. Bardin LD, King P, Maher CG. Diagnostic triage for low back pain: a practical approach for primary care. *Med J Aust.* 2017 Apr 3;206(6):268-273. doi: 10.5694/mja16.00828. PMID: 28359011. 8. O'Sullivan PB, Caneiro J, O'Sullivan K, et al Back to basics: 10 facts every person should know about back pain *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020;54:698-699. 9. O'Sullivan PB, Caneiro J, O'Sullivan K, et al Back to basics: 10 facts every person should know about back pain *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020;54:698-699. 10. O'Sullivan PB, Caneiro J, O'Sullivan K, et al Back to basics: 10 facts every person should know about back pain *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020;54:698-699. 11. Bardin LD, King P, Maher CG. Diagnostic triage for low back pain: a practical approach for primary care. *Med J Aust.* 2017 Apr 3;206(6):268-273. doi: 10.5694/mja16.00828. PMID: 28359011. 12. O'Sullivan PB, Caneiro J, O'Sullivan K, et al Back to basics: 10 facts every person should know about back pain *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020;54:698-699.

What's happening: Programs and events to nurture wellbeing.



Register

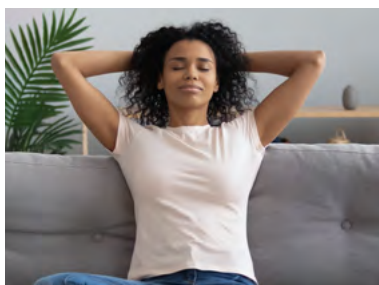
Cost: \$225.00 including tax

Virtual course | Mindfulness and meditation for beginners.

Learning to practice mindfulness and meditation can help create mental space, promote deep relaxation, reduce stress, increase resiliency and more. Our mindfulness and meditation for beginners course is designed to teach you the practice.

Please note that this event is currently available in English, for BC and AB residents only.

Tuesdays - July 6 to 27, 2021, 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm PDT / 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm MDT



Register

Cost: \$498.75 including tax

Virtual program | Stress resilience.

Stress is a normal part of everyday life, but we can help reduce its negative impact on our health and wellness by strengthening our stress resilience.

This 8-week psychoeducation and skills-building program will help participants understand stress and their stress responses, and provide resilience training through practical, research-supported strategies.

Please note that this program is currently available in English, for BC residents only.

Wednesdays - September 8 - October 27, 2021, 9:30 - 11:00 am PST



Pre-register

Complimentary

E-challenge | 30-day no sugar challenge.

Canadians consume an average of 88 pounds of sugar each year. That's more than twice the daily limit recommended by Diabetes Canada.* Are you ready to make a change?

Back by popular demand, our 30-day no sugar challenge has been updated with more delicious recipes, lifestyle strategies and fun quizzes to help you ditch added and refined sugar for 30 days — and ultimately help reduce your consumption for life.

The challenge launches soon!



Personalized care. Premium service.

The TELUS Health Care Centres online monthly magazine is complimentary for clients and subscribers.

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