

Employees • Community Health • Employers

health@work

chistalexiushealth.org

October 2022

**What?!
Dangers
of noise**

**6 Tips for
work-life
balance**

**Conquer
social
anxiety**

**Lifestyle
changes
are good
medicine**



Company Care

 CHI St. Alexius
Health

health@work is a journal published by CHI St. Alexius Health

4 OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE

What? What?! The dangers of too much noise

Noise is more than an annoyance. Research has shown that when noise increases, learning decreases.

6 SUPERVISORY UPDATE

Mental well-being: Supportive strategies for managers

Managers today have a unique opportunity to create a cultural shift that better promotes employee mental health in the workplace.

8 WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Lifestyle changes are good medicine

Maybe you've been told lifestyle changes would be good for your health. This is generally not the most popular answer, but for a lot of ailments it might just be the right one.

10 PROFESSIONAL UPDATE

6 tips for work-life balance

Welcome to fall and all the season brings! While much of this is exciting and fun, it can also challenge your ability to maintain a healthy work life balance.

Editorial Team

Myron Cullen

Editor

Sonja Carberry

Editor

Carmen Schacher

Editor

Dan Ochoa

Graphic Designer

About CHI St. Alexius Health

CHI St. Alexius Health officially announced the formation of its regional health care system on April 19, 2016. The system is the largest health care delivery system in central and western North Dakota and is comprised of a tertiary hospital in Bismarck, and critical access hospitals (CAHs) in Carrington, Dickinson, Devils Lake, Garrison, Turtle Lake, Washburn and Williston and numerous clinics and outpatient services. CHI St. Alexius Health manages five CAHs in North Dakota - Ashley, Elgin, Linton, and Wishek, as well as Mobridge Regional Medical Center in Mobridge, S.D.

3

WORKPLACE
ERGONOMICS

Healthy backpack habits

5

COMPANY
CARE

Staff Highlight

11

LESSONS
LEARNED

Social anxiety

Healthy backpack habits

A backpack is one of the best ways to tote homework, but an overloaded or improperly worn backpack will get a failing grade.

Worn correctly and not overloaded, a backpack is supported by some of the strongest muscles in the body: the back and abdominal muscles. They work together to stabilize the trunk and hold the body in proper postural alignment.

Improper backpack use, however, can cause injury – especially to children with young, growing muscles and joints. The American Physical Therapy Association recommends a child’s backpack weigh no more than about 10% of his or her body weight.

Injury can occur when a heavy load causes poor postures, such as arching the back, leaning forward or, if only one strap is used, leaning to one side. Over time, these positions can cause compression and/or improper spinal alignment, and may damage the disks between the vertebrae that provide shock absorption.

A too-heavy load can also cause muscles to work harder, leading to strain and fatigue, and can leave the back more prone to injury. A heavy load may also cause stress or compression to the shoulders and arms. When nerves are compressed, the child may experience tingling or numbness in the arms.



Jeanne DeKrey,
PT, DPT, PRT
Physical Therapy

Backpack safety tips

- Wear both straps. Using only one strap, even with backpacks that have one strap that runs across the body, causes one shoulder to bear the weight of the bag. By wearing both shoulder straps, the weight of the pack is better distributed, and balanced posture is improved.
- Ensure a good fit. Pay close attention to the way a backpack is positioned on the back, and the size of the backpack should match the size of the child.
 - Shoulder straps should fit comfortably on the shoulder and under the arms, so that the arms can move freely.
 - The bottom of the pack should rest in the contour of the lower back.
 - The pack should “sit” evenly in the middle of the back, not “sag down” toward the buttocks.

- Check the load. Place the heaviest items closest to your child’s back.

Healthy backpack features

- Padded back - Reduces pressure on the back and keeps the pack’s contents from digging into your child’s back.
- Padded, contoured shoulder straps – Reduces pressure on the chest and shoulders.
- Waist belt – Helps distribute some of the load to the pelvis.
- Compression straps on sides/ bottom of backpack – When tightened, these compress the contents of the backpack and stabilize the articles.
- Reflective material – Makes the child visible to drivers at night.
 - If heavier loads are truly necessary, backpacks with wheels may be a good option. However, wheeled backpacks may present problems, such as getting up

and down stairs or trying to fit into cramped locker spaces. If a wheeled backpack is chosen, be sure the extended handle is long enough so your child is not forced to twist and bend, and that the wheels are sufficiently large so the backpack doesn’t shake or topple.

Make sure that your child stays injury-free by asking about and looking for the following signs that the backpack is too heavy:

- Pain when wearing the backpack.
- Arm tingling or numbness.
- Red marks on the shoulders.

Urge your kids to tell you if they are in pain or have discomfort before a problem becomes serious.





What? What?! The dangers of too much noise



*Beth Perius,
PhD, ENP, FNP-BC*

Noise is more than an annoyance. Sounds greater than 35 dB (decibels) impair the ability for children to learn, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). A government report in 2006 showed that 28% of schools in the US that were surveyed reported unsatisfactory or very unsatisfactory acoustics for learning.

Research has shown that when noise increases, learning decreases. Noise can also impair memory, concentration, the ability to distinguish speech and learning to read; reading comprehension is likewise affected.

Noise has been shown to be more damaging to the hair cells of children's ears than adults. Studies on adults show that long-term

and continuous noise affects brain activity and ability, especially distinguishing speech.

Teacher health is likewise affected by noise. Teachers may have to shout to be heard over the din of everything else – conversation, HVAC, etc. Over time, this can lead to vocal fatigue and strain, not to mention hearing loss from damaged hair cells of the ear.

If 35 dB is a quiet room for learning, teachers still need to project their voice to at least 50 dB to be heard. That's the least that is needed for normal conversation. Teachers, more than any other worker group, experience voice complaints (i.e., voice strain and fatigue) for which they seek care.

Noise Levels

35 dB	.....	Limit for background noise in classrooms (recommended by WHO)
30-50 dB	.....	Computer noise
50-70 dB	.....	Conversation
71-75 dB	.....	Vacuum cleaners
85 dB	.....	Traffic
85 dB	.....	Risk of hearing loss

For speech to be understandable by others, it has to be at least 15 dB higher than the background noise. According to a Finnish study, even an empty classroom can exceed safe limits after considering air conditioning, traffic, and other activities in other parts of the school.

The risk of hearing loss occurs at 85 dB, and studies have shown that classroom noise can top 85 dB. Hearing loss, as with noise, can affect children's learning ability as well as their behavior and social skills. Children's ears are even more vulnerable to damage from noise than are adults. Hearing loss is present in about 1 to 5% out of 1,000 school age children, according to the CDC. Hearing loss is present in approximately 15% of 6-19 year olds.

Hearing loss in school age children can be challenging to identify. Hearing difficulty may not be communicated in a way that would necessarily garner concern. Not following directions or paying attention can indicate hearing difficulty as well as repeating the same questions or turning up the TV volume loudly. Inability to locate the source of a sound or not being startled by loud noises is another sign of hearing loss. Hearing loss may be at the root of speech or learning disorders.

Suggestions for maintaining hearing health:

- Keep the volume down on TV, phone and other electronics to reasonable levels.
- Use hearing protection when using loud household appliances and tools, such as vacuum cleaners and lawnmowers.
- Use rugs and carpets, curtains or blinds, and soft materials on the walls such as cork for classrooms. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) recommendation.

For more information about classroom acoustics, go to asha.org/public/hearing/classroom-acoustics/

Staff Highlight: Molly Buzakovic



Molly Buzakovic, DNP, FNP-C Nurse Practitioner - Occupational Medicine

I work with the occupational medicine team to provide prevention and treatment for work-related illnesses and injuries. I am a certified medical examiner (CME) and perform physical examinations for interstate commercial vehicle drivers (DOT physicals).

I am a Family Practice prepared Nurse Practitioner, which allows me to see patients from across the lifespan. At the Occupational Health clinic, I am able to provide Convenient Care services to those 5 years and older.
Education

Bachelor of Science - Nursing
University of Mary
Bismarck, North Dakota

Doctorate of Nursing Practice
(Family Nurse Practitioner)
University of Mary
Bismarck, North Dakota

Center of Orthopaedic Excellence
2nd Floor
310 North 9th Street
Bismarck, ND 58501

For Appointment: 701.530.8103

Monday-Friday 8 am - 4:30 pm
[CHiStAlexiusHealth.org](https://chistalexiushealth.org)



*Kari Schoenhard,
LCSW, LAC*

Mental well-being: Supportive strategies for managers

Managers today have a unique opportunity to create a cultural shift that better promotes employee mental health in the workplace.

As a result of the pandemic, we are hearing and talking more about mental health. Employees are continuing to deal with challenges to their mental wellbeing due to changes around them, such as isolation, loss, changes in our workplace, the increase in working remotely and “the Great Resignation.”

Recently we’re seeing the term “Quiet Quitting.” It describes hard-working employ-

ees who are doing just the bare minimum as they are no longer willing – and perhaps some no longer able due to struggles with stress or burnout – to go above and beyond. Employers are also finding “leave work at work and home at home” is becoming more blurred as employees continue to juggle job and home responsibilities.

Globally, more than 20% of people are struggling with anxiety and depression. We all know that stressors at work can often cause or exacerbate these problems. Unfortunately, only about 50% of adults with mental illness



seek treatment. In the workplace, 30% of those struggling with mental health feel uncomfortable talking about it in the workplace and may not seek help. A 2022 Mental Health America survey found 47% of employees said they knew of the resources, and 38% said they felt comfortable accessing them.

Employees are beginning to look to their employers for holistic solutions to enhance their total well-being. A recent study indicated employers did benefit from supporting mental health at the workplace. Employees who felt supported with their mental health at work were less likely to miss work, less likely to underperform, had higher job satisfaction and voiced intention to stay at their company.

Strategies for supporting employee mental wellbeing

- Give employees access to services, such as an Employee Assistance Program, that enhance their experience by using a proactive, cognitive wellbeing approach. Providing a reminder of the services available – via handouts or brochures, or a provider coming onsite – is often helpful.
- Understand your company's policies on mental health. Do you offer wellness or mental health days? Be familiar with resources available, and how to access them – including insurance coverage, training, hotlines, and employee assistance programs or employee resource groups. Keep your employees informed about new programs or changes to existing programs.
- Don't pressure anyone to discuss their mental health. If they choose to share it with you, offer empathy and support, then encourage the use of the resources available.
- Check in with your team. Set up regular one-on-one meetings, ask to understand how they're doing, and if they're having good work-life balance. If some of your team is working from home, check on them too. Having at least a once-a-month in-person meeting for the whole staff, followed or preceded by a lunch for some check-in and social time if possible, is helpful.
- Listen with empathy. Each of us face a unique set of challenges. When they share their story, be prepared to listen without judgment, thank them for letting you know and ask how you, or the company, can best support them.
- Follow through with your promises. If you offer them more flexible hours, make sure you can deliver on it. If you can't fulfill their request, be honest and brainstorm other ways to accommodate their needs.
- Lead by example. Your actions give your team permission to give themselves the care they need. Prioritize your own well-being by taking time off, practice not responding to emails when you are out of the office, and acknowledge if you're having a difficult day.



Natasha Shipman,
AGNP-C

Lifestyle changes are good medicine

Maybe you've been told lifestyle changes would be good for your health. This is generally not the most popular answer, but for a lot of ailments it might just be the right one.

Many times, we're looking for a quick fix with medication because we get so busy in our daily lives that remembering to take good care of our bodies becomes another thing on the to-do list that may never get crossed off.

The fact is that ailments such as high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, joint pain, insomnia, bowel issues, depression, anxiety and obesity are sometimes directly related to the choices we make in our daily lives.

High blood pressure may be a direct result of too much salt, smoking, caffeine, obesity, pain, stress or lack of sleep.

Elevated blood sugar may be a direct result of obesity, excessive alcohol consumption or a high carbohydrate diet.

Insomnia can sometimes manifest from depression, anxiety, stress or even too much caffeine throughout the day.

Bowel issues such as irritable bowel syndrome can be linked to stress, poor diet and obesity.

Obesity may be directly related to a higher fat and high carbohydrate diet or the inability to exercise due to joint pain

Joint pain may be a result of obesity, so the cycle continues. Joint pain can also sometimes be a physical symptom of depression or anxiety.

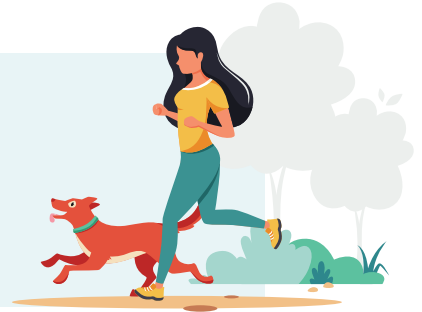
Depression and anxiety may manifest from stress either acute or chronic, poor diet, being sedentary, excessive alcohol or caffeine consumption.

Granted there are times when these ailments may be related to things beyond our control, such as genetics or a more serious medical condition – which is why routine medical exams are always recommended. Sometimes medications are needed to control these symptoms, but either way, making some lifestyle modifications can be very beneficial for overall health.

Lifestyle modification isn't always easy and does require some effort on our parts, but your body will thank you in the long run. Some lifestyle modifications you can make to be healthier and correct or prevent many health issues include:

Exercise

Start by setting a goal to get 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week. If you have joint pain, then look for lower impact exercise opportunities such as water aerobics. Exercise is a great way to relieve stress, help with weight loss, lower blood pressure, increase energy, help depression and lower your risk of cardiovascular disease.



Healthy diet

Focus on eating a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, healthy whole grains, nuts, lean meats and seafood. Limit salt, added sugars, processed foods and alcohol.

Sleep

Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep. If you have issues getting to bed on time, then set a sleep alarm to remind yourself. Dim the screen of your electronics or use a red filter prior to bed. Turn off notifications at night. Work towards a routine sleep/wake cycle. Avoid caffeine. Quit tobacco use.



Reduce stress

Exercise and good sleep can help relieve stress. Make time for yourself and do something you enjoy. Make time for friends and family. Get a pet. Try meditation.

Take care of your mental health

Exercise, healthy diet, sleep and stress reduction can have a very positive impact on your mental health. If you still struggle with anxiety and depression after making these lifestyle modifications then you should reach out to a mental health professional. Any thoughts of suicide or self-harm warrants immediate evaluation by a mental health professional.



Overall well-being is dependent on taking care of yourself physically, emotionally and psychologically. These are just a few tips on lifestyle modification. Many resources can be found online along with tons of wellness apps to help you implement long-lasting lifestyle modifications.

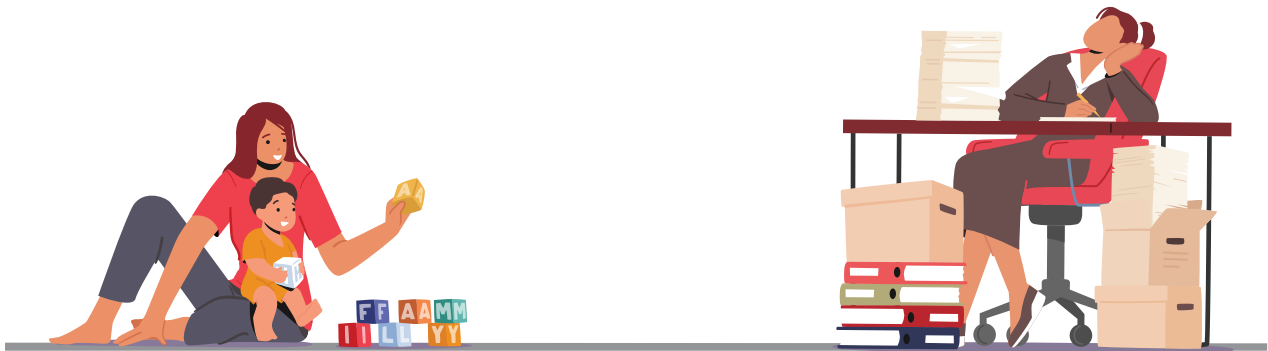


*Kristie Lervick,
BSN, MA, LMAC*

6 tips for work-life balance

Welcome to fall and all the season brings! School is in full swing, and schedules are filling up with activities. While much of this is exciting and fun, it can also challenge your ability to maintain a healthy work life balance.

When demands of life increase with demands of work, that additional stress may manifest in difficulties – psychologically, physically, socially and spiritually. The good news is that by being intentional with strategies to improve your work-life balance, you may avoid the harmful effects of operating beyond your capacity and continue to function well across all areas of your responsibilities! Following are six tips to improve your work life-balance at work and at home.



1. Practice self-compassion.

Self compassion is all about accepting your mistakes and treating yourself as you would a loved one or friend. Pay attention to that “critical inner voice” and change that harsh internal language. Let go of perfectionism and give yourself a break. Sometimes “good enough” is plenty enough!

2. Learn to say “no.”

This can be the most difficult two-letter word to master. Think about the fact that when you say “no” to a lower priority task, it frees you up to say “yes” to something higher on the priority list. Remember you are oneperson and it is impossible to do it “all.”

3. Prioritize your health by focusing on the basics.

Your precious body is the “vehicle” to get you through the day. In times of increased work and life demands, taking care of the basics of the body is often the first thing to get neglected, resulting in less ability to meet the demands of the day. Eating well, getting adequate sleep, connecting with others and moving your body needs to remain your priority.

4. Take a break.

A 10-minute break every 75-90 minutes during the work day can improve your concentration, keep you engaged and reduce stress. A study by Korpela, Kinnunen Geurts and de Blom and Sianoja (2016) found that short breaks from work increases levels of energy at work and actually decreases exhaustion.

5. Make time.

Create space at home for family time by blocking out schedules for all family members to gather and reconnect. Your family will be healthier if you give it time. Family time is an essential factor that helps create love, connections, relationships and strong bonds.

6. Ask for help.

This simple strategy can be difficult for some people due to fearing rejection, not wanting to be a “burden,” or not wanting to appear “weak.” While true that asking for help requires a certain vulnerability, the benefits are shown to far outweigh any perceived downside. Benefits include building resiliency, building connection, increasing productivity, creating a positive culture, and, it can make you and others happy.

You play an important role in both your work life and your personal life. Try these simple strategies to continue to show up each day as your most optimal self. And, as always, we at EAP are here to help.

Sudoku

Puzzle 1

2		5			9			4
						3		7
7			8	5	6		1	
4	5		7					
		9				1		
					2		8	5
	2		4	1	8			6
6		8						
1			2			7		8

Puzzle 2

		6		9		2		
			7		2			
	9		5		8		7	
9				3				6
7	5						1	9
1				4				5
	1		3		9		8	
			2		1			
		9		8		1		

Puzzle 3

			8					
7	8	9		1				6
					6	1		
		7					5	
5		8	7		9	3		4
	4					2		
		3	2					
8				7		4	3	9
					1			

Answers

1	9	3	2	6	5	7	4	8
6	4	8	9	3	7	5	2	1
5	2	7	4	1	8	9	3	6
3	7	1	6	9	2	4	8	5
8	6	9	5	4	3	1	7	2
4	5	2	7	8	1	6	9	3
7	3	4	8	5	6	2	1	9
9	8	6	1	2	4	3	5	7
2	1	5	3	7	9	8	6	4
8	7	6	4	9	3	2	5	1
5	2	9	6	8	4	1	3	7
6	3	8	2	7	1	5	9	4
4	1	7	3	5	9	6	8	2
9	7	3	2	8	4	7	6	1
3	4	6	1	5	8	2	9	7
5	1	8	7	2	9	3	6	4
2	9	7	4	6	3	8	5	1
8	3	2	5	9	6	1	7	4
7	8	9	3	1	2	5	4	6
1	6	5	8	4	7	9	2	3

Puzzle 3

Puzzle 2

Puzzle 1



Is it time to schedule your DOT Physical?

\$90 DOT Physicals.

**Company Care
Occupational Medicine**

310 North 9th Street
Bismarck, ND 58501
P 701.530.8100

Company Care

Minot Medical Plaza
2111 Landmarck Circle
Minot, ND 58703
P 701.420.4259



Social anxiety: Conquer this common condition

Social anxiety, or social phobia, is a mental health condition in which an individual has “marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others” (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5).

Anxiety in general can be described as a state in which one is fearful of something bad happening in the future and with social anxiety, the “something bad” is being negatively judged or evaluated by others. The fear of scrutiny produces anxiety symptoms, such as increased heart rate, sweating, freezing or difficulty breathing.

Those that struggle with social anxiety often say that they are worried about being embarrassed or humiliated in front of others. Not surprisingly, those that experience social anxiety tend to avoid social settings. For example, an adolescent who is experiencing fear of being judged as stupid or unlikeable by peers at school may prefer to do home schooling or may avoid talking in class.

An adult who is fearful of being judged as weird or awkward may avoid going into retail stores or restaurants. Performance anxiety is a particular type of social anxiety and involves being afraid of performing or speaking in front of others (e.g., giving a speech at school or having to talk in a company meeting).

Social anxiety is more common in adolescence or young adulthood compared to older adults, and this is likely because younger individuals have had less of an opportunity to practice and become confident with social skills.

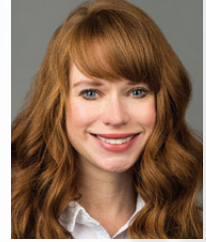
The pandemic resulted in much less in-person socialization and along with less of a need for regular social interactions due to technology and work-from-home lifestyles, it could be predicted that social anxiety will become more prevalent.

It is important to note that people who struggle with social anxiety symptoms are not typically content with the avoidance of social interactions. Many individuals with social anxiety desire to have more positive social connections or experiences, but the fear/anxiety might prevent them from putting themselves in situations that allow for personal interaction.

It is natural for most people to feel nervous and anxious on occasion when faced with new social experiences (e.g. starting college, getting a new role at work, going on a date, etc.); however, if the social anxiety has lasted for more than six months and is causing “significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning,” talking to a mental health professional is recommended (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5).

The good news is that social anxiety is one of the most treatable mental health conditions. Treatment goals for clients with social anxiety include helping the client to expose themselves to social situations that provoke some fear along with teaching coping strategies to help manage anxiety symptoms.

In addition, social skill building and enhancing communication skills are typically addressed in counseling. Clients who participate in therapy often feel more confident and competent in social situations, engage in more social interaction and see improvements in their personal and professional lives.



*Jessica Clement,
MS, LPCC
Licensed
Professional
Clinical Counselor*

Company Care

Keeping Your Workforce Healthy

Going above and beyond for our communities businesses

At CHI St. Alexius Health Company Care our skilled experts work to save your business time and money while keeping your employees healthy and productive. Customizable services to fit your company's needs.

Services Offered:

- Occupational Medicine
- Injury Management
- WSI Case Management
- Ergonomics
- Employee Assistance Program
- Wellness
- Sleep and Tobacco Cessation
- Organizational Health

310 N 9th Street
Bismarck, ND 58501
701.530.8103
CHISTAlexiusHealth.org



Bismarck
701.530.7194

Minot
701.420.4259