



Sensible health and wellness concepts for employees



Fitness Fights Stress



According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, a 2016 study found that Americans gain a pound on average during each holiday season. That number may be less than you expected but add that to the “COVID 19” and the “election 8” you already packed on this year and that spells trouble. It is really starting to add up! First things first – you ramp up your fitness regime. The good news is you get more than you bargained for when you increase your physical activity. In addition to countering or

maintaining weight gain with exercise, you are also taking a big step to decrease stress and protect your mental health.

The body works in amazing ways. When you go outside for a run or log into a “Yoga with Adriene” class, your body reacts to being interrupted from a stable state. While many think the “fight or flight” response is only activated in extreme situations, it also comes into play in your daily workout. In either scenario, neurotransmitters are sent carrying messages to other parts of your body as an internal alert. To counter the threat, each neurotransmitter delivers a message to activate or inactivate resources or energy needed to bring balance back to the system. For example, your sweat glands are told to increase production to cool you off, so you may sweat more during a workout. Your fat stores may be called into action to provide you with the extra energy needed to complete your weightlifting class (with weight loss as an added benefit!) On the other hand, other systems are inactivated and may even stop working for a while. For example, you may have noticed you feel less pain from an injury during exercise. This is because your pain receptors were given a message to stay silent. Pretty amazing, right?



What is the coolest part of this message-palooza that happens during a workout? Studies show the body is using exercise as practice to sharpen internal communication patterns that take place when under stress. In other words, your body is testing its emergency response system so it can sharpen its response to future stressors. You may be harming more than your waistline when you ignore your physical fitness. J. Kip Matthews, Ph.D says, "The less active we become, the more challenged we are in dealing with stress." That sounds like yet another reason to say yes to becoming more active.

Exercise is beneficial to more than just the numbers on the scale or how well you fit into your favorite jeans. It is also a proactive strategy to protect your mental health and reduce your stress. Sounds like a two-for-one deal we can all benefit from this holiday season!

References:

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This newsletter contains general health information and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. You should consult an appropriate health care professional for your specific needs. Some treatments mentioned in this newsletter may not be covered by your health plan. Please refer to your benefit plan documents for information about coverage.



Low-Fat Chewy Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies

Makes about 30 cookies

These Chewy Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Cookies are moist and made light by swapping out most of the butter for applesauce!

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
2 tbsp unsalted butter, room temperature
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup unpacked brown sugar
1 large egg
1/4 cup unsweetened apple sauce
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
2 cups quick oats
3/4 cup dark chocolate chips



NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Serving: 2/3 cup
Calories: 126
Carbohydrates: 16g
Protein: 7g
Fat: 4g
Saturated Fat: 2g
Sodium: 318mg
Fiber: 2g
Sugar: 5g

Splenda Lovers: Substitute all the brown sugar with 1/4 cup Splenda brown sugar blend, and all the white sugar for 1/4 cup Splenda sugar blend.

DIRECTIONS

Part 1

1. Preheat oven to 350°F; line two baking sheets with parchment paper or use a Silpat.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon.
3. In a large bowl, with a mixer, cream together the butter and the sugars on medium speed.
4. Add the egg, followed by the applesauce and vanilla extract.
5. Working by hand, stir in the flour mixture and the oats until just combined and no streaks of flour remain; stir in the chocolate chips.
6. Drop heaping tablespoonfuls (approx. 1 tbsp each) of the dough onto prepared baking sheets, flattening each cookie slightly.
7. Bake for about 10-12 minutes, or until cookies become light brown at the edges.
8. Let cool on baking sheet for 3-4 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
9. Store in an airtight container so you don't eat them all in one sitting!

Source: <https://www.skinnytaste.com/low-fat-chewy-chocolate-chip-oatmeal/>