Stay healthy and safe at work

These days, “stay safe” includes protecting yourself against a number of risks ranging from COVID-19 to crisis situations and natural disasters, no matter where you are. **Here are some important things you can do to stay both safe and healthy in the workplace.**

**Check on—and follow—your company’s COVID-19 protocols.** This may include mask wearing, social and physical distancing and testing requirements.

**Take your own COVID-19 precautions.** For example, sanitize your workstation, wash your hands frequently, and cover your sneezes with a tissue. Know—and monitor—your symptoms, and stay home if you are sick. Consider getting a COVID-19 vaccine to protect yourself and others. For more guidance, visit: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/returning-to-work.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/returning-to-work.html)

**Know your employer’s emergency plan and the nearest emergency exits.** Always attend fire drills. Find out where first aid kits and/or survival kits are stored and, if available, how to use the automated external defibrillator (AED) device.

**Protect against on-the-job injury.** Wear appropriate safety gear. Remember to protect your back—squat using your leg muscles to lift heavy objects, and sit with your shoulders and hips aligned to reduce pressure on your spine. Take your breaks and get plenty of sleep to help reduce your risk of injuries and accidents caused by exhaustion and sleep deprivation.

**Tell your boss or HR about any unsafe conditions.** Report extreme temperatures, toxic fumes, broken glass, unsafe fixtures or obstacles blocking pathways.

**If you’re working after hours, create a buddy system for walking to parking lots or public transportation.** Or ask a security guard to escort you. Always park in well-lighted, high-traffic areas, and have your keys in your hand as you approach your car.

**If a coworker shows signs of potential violence, report this to your supervisor, HR or the appropriate person.**

**Immediately report any incidents of harassment.** This includes sexual and nonsexual threats of any kind in person or via emails, calls or texts from coworkers, customers, family members, acquaintances or strangers. Let the HR representative or security officer know right away if you are being stalked or followed or feel unsafe in any way.

Do you have physical or mental health issues that may place you at certain risks at work? Be sure to talk to your doctor or a licensed counselor for more guidance.
Be active in your community

With the weather improving, it is the perfect opportunity to spend more time outside. While any exercise is beneficial to your health, being physically active outdoors gives you the added benefit of nature, fresh air and a change of scenery, which we could all benefit from after this past year! Going outside can make a big difference in your energy levels and provide a greater sense of well-being. It can also help you reconnect with friends and family members and inspire others to move more, too (while following current COVID-19 guidelines). **Try these ideas!**

- **Take a walk around the block!** Stretching your legs, waving hi to a neighbor or two, and soaking up a little sunshine may be the perfect way to help you feel good.

- **Map out a walking tour of your town!** You may even run into people you haven’t seen in a while.

- **Plan a bike trip with a friend.** Even moderate cycling is a great total body workout, and with all the great scenery to take in around you, you may not even realize you are exercising!

- **Schedule an outdoor yoga session** with someone you know enjoys yoga. Roll out your mat anywhere and listen to an audio class or take an outdoor class together at a nearby studio.

- **Plant a garden and share your bounty** with friends, family and neighbors. If available in your area, join a farm co-op to enjoy fresh produce as well as connect with others in your community.
Rebuild your self-confidence

It’s understandable if your confidence has been shaken lately, given all the uncertainties and shifting responsibilities many of us continue to face. Fortunately, by working with your thoughts, feelings and behaviors, you can rebuild your self-assurance in your abilities to handle challenges, no matter what the situation. **Try these tips:**

**Swap negative for positive self-talk.** Instead of saying, “I’ve got so much to do, I will never get this project done,” tell yourself, “I’m capable of focusing my energy on the task at hand.” Be upbeat and forgiving of yourself.

**Remain calm under pressure.** Nervous energy like butterflies in your stomach is a natural physical response to help prepare you for new situations. Don’t focus on the anxious feelings. Instead, take slow deep breaths, focusing on the moment and the actions to meet the challenge.

**Focus on your “wins,” no matter how small.** Writing down your achievements as well as the challenges you overcame—new family recipes or tasks at work—can boost your confidence when you need it most.

**Always “act confident.”** Practice walking with your head up, your spine straight, your shoulders back and your body open and relaxed. Feeling the sensations of confidence sends a powerful message to your brain that “I’ve got this!” when facing challenges.

**Post your goals—daily and long-term—where you can see them.** You’ll have a better chance of meeting them, which in turn creates a pattern of success you can build on.

**Get information to propel you forward.** You may be hesitant to tackle a problem arising from a change in your job responsibilities, for instance, or in supporting your kids’ education. Getting even a tidbit of information (and upgrading your skills where necessary) can build your confidence to take the first step, then the next, and so on.

**Learn to speak up.** Respect your own opinions and learn to communicate them effectively. When facing disagreements, for example, consider these starting phrases: “The way I see it…” Or, “In my view, I think this might work better…”

**Surround yourself with people who uplift you.** Associating with supportive people helps you support yourself.

**For more help, talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a licensed counselor.**

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**National Safety Month**

Hazardous heat stress at work can come from a variety of sources and can lead to serious illness. If you’re wearing clothing that keeps body heat in, including face coverings to protect against COVID-19, it’s important to follow precautions to cool off and rehydrate.

Here’s what you should know: [https://bit.ly/3hQNQsG](https://bit.ly/3hQNQsG)