

Day 4 of Women's Health Week is about "Making it work", let's learn about workplace health issues, such as how to deal with stress and getting you up and moving at your workstation.

Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace

Depression, anxiety, stress, poor body image, grief, loss, a major change in your life such as becoming a new parent can all affect your mental and emotional health and day to day living. Sadness and anxiety are normal emotions that help alert us to protect us and cause us to act. This is healthy! What is unhealthy is when these feelings become excessive, irrational, ongoing, distressing or interfere with daily life.

Depression, anxiety, stress, grief can be managed using interventions and strategies such as cognitive behaviour therapy, relaxation, mindfulness, and 'talk' therapy. If you are aware that you are not functioning as you normally do, you know something is worrying you, this is the time to learn more about what is happening to you and perhaps seek help.

Where to start?

Start a diary or journal, this can help you clarify your feelings and assist you in talking to your health care professional about what support you may need.

Things to note down might include:

- Your symptoms of depression, anxiety, or stress
- Things that trigger feelings of distress
- What creates negative thoughts for you
- What creates positive thoughts for you, it is important to acknowledge what makes you happy and relaxed

Tips and tricks for managing mental health and stress in the workplace:

- Learn relaxation techniques to help you feel calm through the day and to provide a coping mechanism in times of stress and distress
- Set small tasks so each day you feel you have achieved something
- Remember and focus on the things you achieve each day – even the small things.
- Do more things that make you feel positive: listen to music, sit outside during breaks, sit quietly
- Exercise to stimulate endorphins ('feel-good' hormones) – these can improve your mood and help you cope better with your feelings. This may be going for a walk around the block during your lunch break or hitting the gym after work
- Avoid the highs and lows of sugary and high carbohydrate foods – eat regular small healthy snacks such as raw fruit and vegetables and nuts
- Spend time with the friends and family members who are easier to be with and make you feel more positive

Where to get help?

General Practitioner

[Beyond Blue | 24/7 Support for Anxiety, Depression and Suicide Prevention](#)

[Online & phone support | headspace](#)

[Lifeline Australia - 13 11 14 - Crisis Support. Suicide Prevention.](#)

Movement at your workstation

There are many benefits to regular movement at work both physically, emotionally and for our work performance.

Regular movement at our workstation can improve our work performance and productivity by improving concentration and reducing fatigue.

For our physical health, those that practice active movement at work experience less strain related injuries, fewer musculoskeletal aches and pains, improved digestion, and overall cardiovascular health with the power of movements.

Movement has been proven to improve mental health in the workplace and is a good time to shake off any stressful meetings or disagreements!

5 tips for being active at work:

1. Ditch the office chair for part of your workday. Use standup desk or sit on an exercise ball
2. Volunteer for the morning coffee run
3. Skip the lift and take the stairs
4. Go for a walk during your morning tea break or lunch break. This could be around the office or around the block (extra bonus points for Vitamin D)
5. Participate in 'deskercise' activities throughout the day

DE-STRESS MONDAY *Happy New Week!*

6 WAYS TO 'DESKERCISE'

Sitting at a desk hour after hour and day after day can take a toll on your body. Here are some simple exercises you can do to get your muscles working and your blood flowing (which can also get ideas flowing).

 <p>1</p>	 <p>2</p>	 <p>3</p>
<p>SIDE SWIVELS: Sit upright with your feet hovering over the floor. Holding your desk with your hands, use your core to swivel the chair from side to side.</p>	<p>KNEE-UPS: Raise your arms up to your shoulders. Bring them down while lifting a knee up as if you're breaking a twig over your knee. Repeat with the other knee.</p>	<p>BAG CURLS: Start with your arm by your thighs. Bend your elbow and curl your arm up toward your chest, pause, then lower it.</p>
 <p>4</p>	 <p>5</p>	 <p>6</p>
<p>CHAIR DIPS: Grip a non-rolling chair on both sides and slide to the front edge. Start with your arms straight and legs extended, then dip by bending your arms. Push yourself up, then dip again.</p>	<p>STRETCHES: Your back, neck, and shoulders deserve a break from sitting, especially if you've been staring at a screen. Stand up and stretch from your fingertips to your toes.</p>	<p>CHAIR SQUAT: Sit on the edge of your chair. Stand up and sit down without using your hands. Make sure to stick your backside out and don't allow your knees to cross over your toes.</p>

Breastfeeding in the workplace

The Australian Government has legislation in place that protects breastfeeding mothers in the workplace. This means that women can not be discriminated against, such as missed promotions in the workplace or purposely being rostered shifts that disadvantage feeding schedules, due to their breastfeeding needs. Employers must support women, within reason, to breastfeed or express whilst at work.

Continuing your feeding journey when returning to work starts with a discussion with your employer about your rights. Your employer can NOT encourage you to cease breastfeeding to return to work.

Breastfeeding in the workplace may include:

- Your baby being brought into you to breastfeed on site. (The workplace is not required to provide this option legally as some workplaces may be unsafe to do so)
- Expressing breastmilk at work)
- Working from home (in discussion with your employer)

What your workplace must provide

- A suitable place to breastfeed or express milk
 - A designated room, sick bay or first aid room. A clean private room is a must.
 - A power point for an electric pump
 - A fridge or freezer to store your milk
 - Access to a sink to clean your hands and pumping equipment
- Coordinated break times around your feeding schedule, the employer is not required to provide you with paid feeding breaks

Tips and tricks

Getting expressed milk home - a good quality cooler bag is a must to get milk home to your baby safely, some coolers may also require the use of ice blocks. A thermometer can be handy as well if there is a long distance to travel home!

Encouraging the let-down – some expressing mothers find it difficult to express milk when they feel uncomfortable or stressed. Sitting with your breasts out at work is not common! There are a few things that may help relieve anxieties around expressing at work and encouraged milk let-down.

1. Talk to your employer about the option of a locked door on your breastfeeding/expressing area. This will eliminate any worries of someone walking in on you
2. Think about your baby. Thinking about your baby releases oxytocin which encourages the let-down reflex. Some mothers may find having a blanket or toy that belongs to their baby helps.
3. Using relaxation techniques – listening to music, reading, sitting with a cup of tea. Try to pair your expressing time with the things that you enjoy or make you feel good.

Saving time – expressing takes time. Setting up your equipment, encouraging a let-down and cleaning afterwards chews into your pumping time. A double pump that can express both breasts at the same time will help.

Women's Health Week "Making it work" – Information Sheet



Keep nourished and hydrated— Their body has an increase in nutritional needs when producing milk, women often experience an increase in appetite, this is the bodies way of looking after itself. You might like to have a snack bag ready for your time spent breastfeeding or pumping at work. It is important to include foods that will fuel your body such as yoghurt, wholegrain biscuits and cheese, seeds and nuts or fruits.

Our body also requires more fluid to produce breast milk. If you aren't drinking enough fluid, it can leave you dehydrated and feeling thirsty. Water is the best fluid. A glass of water next to you when feeding is handy, especially during the warmer months.

Easy access – when dressing for the day consider how easy it will be to access your breasts for breastfeeding or expressing.

Where to get help

[Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces | Australian Breastfeeding Association](#)

[Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Resource](#)

[Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace Resource](#)

[Returning to work from parental leave - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)