



YOUR MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM: HOW IT AFFECTS YOU AND HOW YOU AFFECT IT

The Musculoskeletal System is defined as the parts of your body that are responsible for providing form, support, stability and movement. This includes bones, joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons, cartilage and even the nerves that send signals throughout your body as instruction to move. Because of the vital roles the musculoskeletal system plays, it's important to adopt a lifestyle that helps it be as healthy as possible.

Individuals who eat healthy, exercise and stretch, use proper body mechanics, have good posture, manage stress levels and get quality sleep are not only less likely to develop illness but are also less likely to suffer a musculoskeletal injury. But then, if a musculoskeletal injury does occur, the severity is lessened and the recovery time is shortened because their body was starting from a strong, healthy place when the injury occurred. However, individuals who don't eat healthy, don't exercise and stretch, don't use proper body mechanics, don't have good posture, don't manage stress levels and don't get quality sleep are not only more likely to develop illness but are also more likely to suffer a musculoskeletal injury. And then, when a musculoskeletal injury does occur, the severity is heightened and the recovery time is lengthened because the body was starting from a weak, unhealthy place when the injury occurred.

All of this means that by maintaining a healthy musculoskeletal system through nutrition, hydration, exercise, stretching, proper body mechanics and ergonomics, good posture, stress management and quality sleep, we can help protect ourselves from not only illness, but also injury, and we can even remain active as we age. But if we allow our musculoskeletal system to weaken because we make unhealthy lifestyle choices, we start to find that small tasks such as walking, bending over to pick something up, squatting, lifting or even sitting and standing become strenuous and have the potential of sidelining us for prolonged periods.

For the rest of 2016, Empowered Health will provide a monthly wellness topic that focuses on the specifics of musculoskeletal health and helps employees better understand the behaviors they can start doing in order to have healthy musculoskeletal systems. Next month's topic will be "Exercise and Stretching to Reduce Injury and Illness."