



# Health Beat

Health Resource Center



## Fighting Stress-Related Illnesses

By Amanda Matthews

The holiday season would not be complete without shopping in crowded malls, avoiding repetitive Christmas jingles on the radio, feasting on turkey and pumpkin pie, and studying for finals. Though this time of year is meant for holiday cheer, most students ultimately experience holiday stress instead.

Stress can deplete the body's energy and increase one's vulnerability to

illness.<sup>1</sup> Tense muscles can cause headaches and neck pain, and normal digestive processes can be interrupted. Prolonged stress can lead to a decreased white blood cell count, increasing one's susceptibility to illness.

Since holiday stress is unavoidable, the best options are stress relief, problem-focused coping, and reappraisal.<sup>1</sup> Some common forms of stress relief include physical activity, muscle relaxation, massage, listening to music, journal writing, taking a bath, watching a movie, and hanging out with friends.

Stress relief reduces tension and negative emotions, but it does not eliminate the stressor. Problem-focused coping, which involves taking specific steps to solve one's prob-

lems, can be a very powerful stress reducer.<sup>1</sup> For example, a study schedule is a helpful solution for balancing one's holiday-related activities with study needs.

A person can also shift thinking about final exams and the holidays, a method called reappraisal. Instead of dreading final exams, a student can view finals week as the opening event for holiday break.

Now is the time to create a personalized stress relief and reduction arsenal. Use the suggestions provided in this article to determine which methods work for you.

### Reference:

1. Wade, C and Tavis, C. (2002). *Invitation to Psychology*. New Jersey, Prentice Hall.



Taking time to relax can energize the mind and help the body fight illness.

## True or False? The Facts About Stress

Take this quiz to test your knowledge about stress and its impacts. Answers appear on page 4.

1. Sometimes stress can be good for you.
2. Everyone responds to stress in the same way.
3. You can have a high level of stress and display no symptoms or signs.
4. Stress is unavoidable and should just be accepted.
5. Stress is a type of disease that has a cure.
6. People need stress to motivate them to a higher level of achievement.

### References:

1. [www.helping.apa.org](http://www.helping.apa.org)
2. [www.futurevision.org/stress](http://www.futurevision.org/stress)



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- Check our website for information about upcoming schedules for Spring 2004.
- Sexual Health Awareness Workshop will continue in January 2004.
- HIV & STD Testing appointments available on January 8, 2004, 1 to 5 p.m.
- Nutrition Counseling ends December 12, 2003 and resumes in March 2004.



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## On-Campus Services Here to Help

by Rachel Suslow

The holiday season is always synonymous with cold, flu, and stress. Fortunately there are services on campus that can relieve all three for free!

The Student Health Center offers a variety of health services for enrolled students. It is located on the corner of State University Drive and Merriam Way. The services provided include: outpatient treatment of sudden illnesses or injuries, immunizations, and physical examinations. The Health Center also offers pap smears and contraceptive services for women and annual examinations for men. The pharmacy offers various over-the-counter medications and contraceptives at reduced prices. Referrals to outside clinics are available and can be issued for dermatology, orthopedics, and psychiatry.

Students who have questions about healthy lifestyles or about their personal health can utilize the Health Resource Center (HRC) for informa-

tion. The HRC offers a variety of programs including free Nutritional Counseling and free HIV/STD Testing and Counseling. The Men's Health Clinic is a service for male students that includes a multi-screening laboratory and full physical examination. Students interested in receiving information on STDs, birth control, and breast/testicular self-exams can attend a two-hour Sexual Health Awareness Workshop.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are available for students needing to talk with someone about a personal issue or problem. This can be a comforting resource as the holidays approach because of the stress and depression with which they are often associated. CAPS is located on the second floor of Brotman Hall in Room 226. Students can go to CAPS for a

wide range of issues, including academic problems, substance abuse, cross-cultural issues, eating disorders, family and relationship problems, grief and loss, homesickness, identity issues, loneliness and isolation, low self-esteem, sexuality concerns,

**On-campus services are meant to be convenient, useful resources for students. Guidance is available concerning a variety of topics, including concerns about physical, mental, and emotional health.**

stress, anxiety, and depression. CAPS also offers personal counseling services, crisis intervention, group counseling, life skills training and consultation, and workshops. The group counseling services address a variety of issues such as: assertiveness training, anxiety reduction, couple therapy, intimacy, divorce, parenting, physical and psychological abuse, time management, gay and lesbian concerns, and women's and men's concerns.

## Celebrate Safely with Smart Alcohol Choices

by Cynthia Chavez

The holidays are supposed to be a time filled with happiness and celebration. Unfortunately, the holiday season is the most dangerous time of year for alcohol-related accidents and death. The good part is that it is 100% preventable. The problem is that many people tend to drink irresponsibly and call it having a good time. They never think that drunk driving can quickly turn a joyous, fun-filled celebration into a tragic end.

When people do decide that they are going to consume alcohol, they have to be careful and must make a conscious choice to

stay in control. Table I on page 3 is a breakdown of the different categories people fall into depending on how much one drinks.

During the holidays, there has been a trend of "holiday drinkers" who drink relatively small amount, and only during the holidays. In turn, these people tend to have very low tolerance levels. These people become intoxicated very easily with a small amount of alcohol. They often underestimate their level of impairment and decide that they are able to drive their vehicles when in reality, they are in no condition to do so. They may get arrested for Driving While Intoxicated (DWI), although they have a rather low Blood

Alcohol Content.<sup>2</sup> This is a very dangerous ongoing trend.

Dangerous decisions such as getting behind the wheel while intoxicated are the reasons that the holidays have such high rates for alcohol-related deaths and injuries. The time span from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day in 2001 has the highest alcohol-related rate of fatalities. In 2002, 44% of all traffic fatalities in California during the Thanksgiving holiday period were due to alcohol-related motor vehicle collisions, 29% during Christmas, and 62% during the New Year's Holiday. Many people feel that even though they have had only a couple of drinks, they are

*(Continued on page 3)*



# Studying: It's About Quality, Not Quantity

**By Kristen Force**

This is the semester that you planned to read all your textbooks, complete all assignments early, and begin studying for exams long before the night before, right? If you, like most students, weren't able to keep your semester resolution, there is still a way to get through finals without sleep deprivation and a diet of soda and candy bars.

Not everyone will have the luxury of getting eight hours of sleep

during the week of finals, but at least six hours each night will give the brain an opportunity to make longer lasting

**Properly caring for the body can make studying more productive... even that last-minute cram session when you first open the book.**

memories.<sup>1</sup> Keeping a normal sleep cycle will make it easier for your brain

to retain and produce information.

The best way to learn new material is to spend some time NOT studying. Take breaks to get away from the books and engage in light physical activity. Your body, including your brain, needs a chance to rest and relax to efficiently process information. Increased oxygen circulation also clears the mind and makes the brain function faster.<sup>2</sup>

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Celebrate Safely...

still capable of operating a vehicle. However if that were true, we would not have such high rates of alcohol-related fatalities. Alcohol impairs our judgment, which may cause overconfidence, leading to possible speeding and erratic driving. It affects our reaction time, which may result in a delayed response in crucial situations. It impairs our night vision, resulting in being easily blinded by the headlights of oncoming vehicles. Tunnel vision is increased by alcohol, which restricts the range of our peripheral vision. In addition, body control is diminished, possibly resulting in weaving driving patterns, excessive slowing, and sudden unexpected stops.<sup>3</sup> These are all things that should be kept in mind be-

fore getting behind the wheel after having "just a few drinks."

These types of tragedies are especially difficult during this time of year, but there are ways to prevent a disaster. Messages in the media suggest people have a better time when they are drinking, but alcohol is not necessary to have a good time.

- Sobriety is always a safe solution.
- If you choose to drink, making sure there is a designated driver who will not be drinking.
- Make sure to avoid salty food because they make you thirsty and in turn may sway you to drink.
- Be sure to have something to eat so as not to drink on an empty stomach.
- Be a responsible drinker by giving

yourself a reasonable limit of how many drinks you are going to have and stick with it.

- Use non-carbonated bases, such as fruit punch, if preparing an alcoholic punch because alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream faster with a carbonated base.

The most important thing to keep in mind is to make the holiday season fun-filled, joyous, and of course, SAFE!!!

### References:

1. [www.tricare.osd.mil](http://www.tricare.osd.mil)
2. <http://psycentral.com>
3. [www.laces-ucla.org](http://www.laces-ucla.org)

## Table I. Alcohol Equivalencies and Categories of Drinkers

One drink equals: 12 ounces of beer

4 - 6 ounces of wine

1 - 2 ounces of hard liquor



A light drinker consumes 1-2 drinks in a week.

A moderate drinker consumes 2-4 drinks in a week.

A heavy drinker consumes 5 or more drinks at one sitting.

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**HERPEVAC**

Student Health Services at CSULB invites female students to participate in the Herpes Vaccine Trial for Women. Must be healthy, without herpes, and 18 to 30 years old.

For more information, call:  
**562.985-4874**

Or visit [www.herpesvaccine.nih.gov](http://www.herpesvaccine.nih.gov)

## Studying...

Just before an exam, eat nutritious foods while studying. Junk foods with simple sugars provide a quick energy boost, but will lower your energy in the long run. Too much caffeine can cause you to lose concentration when you need to be most attentive and can disrupt your sleep.<sup>1</sup>

Organization plays an impor-

tant role in exam success. Decide what you really need to study and focus on that first. Do an overall review of the general subject matter if time permits.

Finally, stay calm and be confident when you get to the test. While preparation is crucial, your mental state has a significant effect on performance

as well. Think positive thoughts and have faith in your abilities. Anxiety and stress associated with test-taking can be largely reduced by the effort invested in advance.

### References:

1. [www.albertson.edu](http://www.albertson.edu)
2. [www.maze.sa.gov.au](http://www.maze.sa.gov.au)

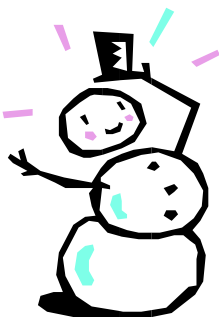


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## True/False Quiz Answers

1. TRUE - Positive stress, known as eustress, can contribute to an individual's performance and can increase thought processes. Athletic competitions, job interviews, and exams can trigger a beneficial stress response if managed properly.<sup>1</sup>

2. FALSE - Different situations and different coping mechanisms require a number of solutions. While one person may



listen to loud music to relax and ease stress, another may need complete quiet.<sup>2</sup>

3. TRUE - Hiding symptoms that may exist through denial or medication can prolong the effect of the stress and further strain your physiological and psychological systems.<sup>2</sup>

4. FALSE - Many people successfully manage stress and prevent it from becoming

overwhelming. Planning and establishing priorities often minimizes stress.<sup>2</sup>

5. FALSE - Stress is not something that can be isolated and studied like a disease. It is not alive or able to multiply like a bacteria or a virus.<sup>3</sup>

6. FALSE - Stress is often associated with achievements and productivity, but is not required. Individuals can achieve a "low stress" lifestyle and still be extremely successful.<sup>3</sup>

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