



# The well-being of the Paramedic

BLED SOE • PORTER • CHERRY

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## Topics

- Wellness of the Paramedic
- Impact of Shift Work on the Paramedic
- Proper Body Mechanics
- Managing Hostile Situations

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## Introduction

- Well-being is a fundamental aspect of top-notch performance in EMS. It includes:
  - Physical well-being
  - Mental and emotional well-being
  - Safe lifting
- Seize the information about safe practice and apply it to your life.

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## Basic Physical Fitness



- The benefits of physical fitness are well known:
  - Decreased resting heart rate and blood pressure
  - Increased oxygen-carrying capacity
  - Increased muscle mass and metabolism
  - Increased resistance to illness and injury
  - Enhanced quality of life

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## Core Components of Physical Fitness

- Muscular Strength
- Cardiovascular Endurance
- Flexibility



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## Muscular Strength

- Achieved with regular exercise
- Exercises may be isometric and isotonic
- ISOMETRIC exercise is active exercise performed against stable resistance.
- ISOTONIC exercise is active exercise during which muscles are worked through their range of motion.

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## Cardiovascular Endurance

- Is a result of exercising at least three days a week vigorously enough to raise your pulse to its target heart rate.

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## Flexibility...the Forgotten Element of Fitness

- To achieve or regain flexibility, stretch main muscle groups regularly.
- Stretch daily.
- Never bounce when stretching.
- Hold a stretch for at least 60 seconds.

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## It's a Tough Job...



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# Nutrition

- It is a myth that people in EMS cannot maintain an adequate diet.
- The most difficult part is changing bad habits.
- Good nutrition is fundamental to well-being.

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**Learn the major food groups and eat a variety of foods from them daily.**



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**Avoid or minimize intake of fat, salt, sugar, cholesterol, & caffeine.**



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**Check food labels for information about the nutritional content of the food you eat.**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size	Serving Size 8 fl oz (240 mL)
Number of servings per container	Servings Per Container 8
Amount Per Serving	
Calories per serving	Calories 110    Calories from Fat 0
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Potassium 450mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 20g	9%
Sugars 22g	
Protein 2g	
Vitamin C 120% • Calcium 2%	
Thiamin 10% • Niacin 4%	
Vitamin B6 6% • Folate 15%	
<small>Not a significant source of saturated fat, cholesterol, dietary fiber, vitamin A and iron.</small>	
<small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a diet of 2,000 calories.</small>	

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## Good sense says...

- Eating on the run can be less detrimental if you plan ahead –
  - Avoid fast foods.
  - Carry a small cooler filled with whole-grain sandwiches, fruits, and vegetables.
  - Monitor your fluid intake. Drink plenty of water.

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## Habits and Addictions

- Many in high-stress jobs abuse substances such as nicotine and caffeine. Those in EMS are no exception.

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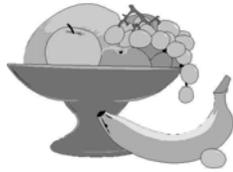
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## Habits & Addictions (cont)

- Choose a healthier life and avoid overindulging in harmful substances.



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## Habits & Addictions (cont)

- Consider substance abuse programs, nicotine patches, or a 12-step program.

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## Habits & Addictions (cont)

- Whatever it takes:  
Get free of addictions.



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## Back Safety

- ❑ EMS is a physically demanding career.
- ❑ Lifting and moving patients is frequently required.
- ❑ To avoid back injury, you must keep your back fit for the work you do.

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**Correct  
Posture Will  
Minimize  
the Risk of  
Back Injury**

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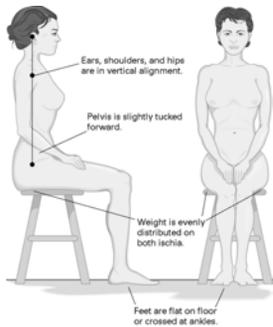
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## Correct Sitting Posture



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## Important Lifting Principles

(1 of 2)

- ❑ Move a load only if you can handle it.
- ❑ Ask for help if you need it.
- ❑ Position load close to your body.
- ❑ Keep your palms up—when possible.
- ❑ Do not hurry.
- ❑ Bend with your knees.
- ❑ “Lock-in” the spine.

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## Important Lifting Principles

(2 of 2)

- ❑ Always avoid twisting and turning.
- ❑ Let the leg muscles do the work.
- ❑ Exhale during lifting.
- ❑ Given a choice, push. Do not pull.
- ❑ Look where you are going.
- ❑ Only one person should be in charge of verbal commands.

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## Personal Protection from Disease

- ❑ There's a lot you can do to minimize the risk of infection.
- ❑ Begin by developing a habit of doing the things promoted in this chapter.

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# Infectious Disease

- Caused by pathogens, such as bacteria or viruses.
- May be spread from person to person.
- For example, infection by way of bloodborne pathogens can occur when the blood of an infected person comes in contact with another person's broken skin.

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# Common Infectious Diseases

Table 2-2 COMMON INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Disease	Mode of Transmission	Incubation Period
AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)	AIDS- or HIV-infected blood via intravenous drug use, semen and vaginal fluids, blood transfusions, or (rarely) needle sticks. Mothers also may pass HIV to their unborn children.	Several months or years
Hepatitis B, C	Blood, stool, or other body fluids, or contaminated objects	Weeks or months
Tuberculosis	Respiratory secretions, airborne or on contaminated objects.	2 to 6 weeks
Meningitis, bacterial	Oral and nasal secretions.	2 to 10 days
Pneumonia, bacterial and viral	Oral and nasal droplets and secretions.	Several days
Influenza	Airborne droplets, or direct contact with body fluids.	1 to 3 days
Staphylococcal skin infections	Contact with open wounds or sores or contaminated objects.	Several days
Chicken pox (varicella)	Airborne droplets, or contact with open sores.	11 to 21 days
German measles (rubella)	Airborne droplets. Mothers may pass it to unborn children.	10 to 12 days
Whooping cough (pertussis)	Respiratory secretions or airborne droplets.	6 to 20 days

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# Body Substance Isolation

- A strict form of infection control that is based on the assumption that all blood and other body fluids are infectious.
  - Take BSI precautions with every patient.

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## BSI is achieved through the use of PPE.

- Appropriate personal protective equipment should be available in every emergency vehicle.
  - Protective gloves
  - Masks and protective eyewear
  - HEPA and N-95 respirators
  - Disposable resuscitation equipment



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## High Efficiency Particulate Air Respirator (HEPA Mask)



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## An N-95 Respirator



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**To Remove Gloves, Hook the Gloved Fingers of One Hand Under the Cuff of the Other Glove.**



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**Then Slide the Fingers of the Ungloved Hand Under the Remaining Glove's Cuff.**



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**Perhaps the Most Important Infection-Control Practice Is...**

**HANDWASHING**

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**To Wash Your Hands Properly,  
Lather Well and Scrub Under  
Your Nails.**



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**When You Rinse Your Hands, Point  
Them Downward So That Soap and  
Water Run Off Away From Your Body.**



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**Important:**



- **Dispose of Biohazardous Waste in a Properly Marked Bag.**

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## Also Very Important:

- Discard Needles and Other Sharp Objects in a Properly Labeled, Puncture-proof Container.



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**Contaminated  
Non-disposable Equipment  
Must Be Cleaned,  
Disinfected, or Sterilized.**

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## ...Cleaned, Disinfected, or Sterilized

- Cleaning refers to washing an object with soap and water.
- Disinfecting includes cleaning with a disinfectant.
- Sterilizing is the use of a chemical or steam to kill all microorganisms on an object.

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# Post-Exposure Procedures

- In most areas, an EMS provider who has had an exposure should:
  - Immediately wash the affected area.
  - Get a medical evaluation.
  - Take the immunization boosters.
  - Notify the agency's infection control liaison.
  - Document the event.

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# Death and Dying

- Situations involving death and dying are the most personally uncomfortable for most paramedics.
- Each person faces a death situation based on his or her prior experience of loss, coping skills, religious convictions, and other personal background.

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## Loss, Grief, and Mourning

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## Know and Understand the 5 Stages of Loss

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

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## Stress and Stress Management

(1 of 2)

- A stimulus that causes stress is known as a stressor.

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# Stress and Stress Management

(2 of 2)

## ■ Adapting to stress is a dynamic, evolving process:

- Defensive strategies
- Coping skills
- Problem-solving skills

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## Your job in managing stress is to learn these things:

- Your personal stressors.
- Amount of stress you can take before it becomes a problem.
- Stress management strategies that work for you.

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**Table 2-4** WARNING SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS

Physical	Cognitive
Nausea/vomiting	Confusion
Upset stomach	Lowered attention span
Tremors (lips, hands)	Calculation difficulties
Feeling uncoordinated	Memory problems
Diaphoresis (profuse sweating), flushed skin	Poor concentration
Chills	Difficulty making decisions
Diarrhea	Disruption in logical thinking
Aching muscles and joints	Disorientation, decreased level of awareness
Sleep disturbances	Seeing an event over and over
Fatigue	Distressing dreams
Dry mouth	Blaming someone
Shakes	
Headache	
Vision problems	
Difficult, rapid breathing	
Chest tightness or pain, heart palpitations, cardiac rhythm disturbances	

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Emotional	Behavioral
Anticipatory anxiety	Change in activity
Denial	Hyperactivity, hypoactivity
Fearfulness	Withdrawal
Panic	Suspiciousness
Survivor guilt	Change in communications
Uncertainty of feelings	Change in interactions with others
Depression	Change in eating habits
Grief	Increased or decreased food intake
Hopelessness	Increased smoking
Feeling overwhelmed	Increased alcohol intake
Feeling lost	Increased intake of other drugs
Feeling abandoned	Being overly vigilant to environment
Feeling worried	Excessive humor
Wishing to hide	Excessive silence
Wishing to die	Unusual behavior
Anger	Crying spells
Feeling numb	
Identifying with victim	

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## To manage stress:

- ❑ Use controlled breathing...focus attention on your breathing.
- ❑ Use reframing...mentally reframe interfering thoughts.
- ❑ Attend to the medical needs of the patient...even if you know them.

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**Shift Work Is Inherently Stressful Due to the Disruption of Circadian Rhythms and Sleep Deprivation.**

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## Shift Work Disruption

### ■ IF YOU HAVE TO SLEEP IN THE DAYTIME:

- Sleep in a cool, dark place.
- Stick to a common sleeping time and pattern.
- Unwind appropriately after a shift in order to rest.
- Post a “day sleeper” sign on your front door, turn off the phone’s ringer and lower the volume of the answering machine.

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## Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

- A system of interventions usually performed by regional, non-partisan, multi-disciplinary teams and trained mental health workers.
- A critical incident can impact a single crew or an entire agency.

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## The 11 Components of CISM are:

(1 of 2)

- Pre-incident stress training.
- On-scene support.
- Advice to command staff.
- Initial discussion.
- Defusing.

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## The 11 Components of CISM are:

(2 of 2)

- ❑ Demobilization.
- ❑ Critical incident stress debriefing.
- ❑ Follow-up services.
- ❑ Special debriefings to community groups.
- ❑ Spouse and family education and support.
- ❑ Individual consultations.

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## General Safety Considerations

- ❑ Safety is a priority!
- ❑ Risks include violent people, environmental hazards, structural collapse, motor vehicles, and infectious diseases.
- ❑ Many of these hazards can be minimized with protective equipment such as helmets, body armor, reflective tape, supportive footwear, and BSI precautions.

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## General Human Relations Advice

- ❑ Interpersonal relations...treat every person you meet with dignity and respect regardless of race, age, sex, religion, or present background.

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## General Driving Advice

- ❑ Roadway safety...be sure to obey roadway laws and follow all driving safety guidelines.

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## Summary (1 of 2)

- ❑ Wellness of the Paramedic
- ❑ Impact of Shift Work on the Paramedic
- ❑ Proper Body Mechanics
- ❑ Managing Hostile Situations

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## Summary (2 of 2)

- ❑ EMS is stressful
- ❑ Taking care of ourselves is important
- ❑ Use common sense to adapt and overcome...

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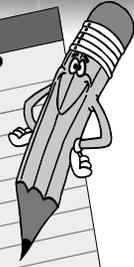
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# Get This...

You must  
always strive  
to earn your  
status as a  
health care  
professional!



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