

Body Aches: Dealing with Pain in the Food & Beverage Industry

Words by David B. Fishkin, DC, MPH Photo by Flickr user snowpea&bokchoi



Food and beverage employees are among the hardest-working people in the service industry.

A breakneck pace coupled with long hours and physical demands often lead to breakdowns in the body. Add physical stress, job insecurity, low wages and inadequate healthcare coverage and you're brewing up the perfect recipe for unhealthy changes in your body.

The good news is, you can often manage these immediate challenges that lead to unwanted physical and chemical changes.

Let's consider diet as a factor.

While not an obvious culprit when thinking of stress and physical pain, diet can have a tremendous bearing on how bad body pain can get. Simply put, foods that break down into sugar fuels inflammation, which is often the driving factor.

The broad category of carbohydrates satisfies this definition of inflammatory foods. Breads, pasta, potatoes—all while satisfying—have a high sugar content. This isn't to say you shouldn't enjoy them, but reducing consumption of these foods may reduce inflammation.

When there's pain, there's inflammation. Your first line of defense when experiencing pain is to apply ice, not heat. It's a common misconception that heat helps heal pain or injury, but heat will only bring more blood and inflammation to the area. Even with chronic conditions, ice can be very helpful. You may read the specific instructions for icing injuries [here](#).

Another factor is proper footwear. Long hours standing on unforgiving floors in shoes unsuitable, poorly-fitted or too worn to provide support needed for such a demanding job may lead to physical pain as well. I've seen a great deal of problems with the lower back, shoulders and neck regions due to poor footwear.

Even when footwear is properly chosen and appropriate, there's the issue of structural foot problems that no shoe will correct. This requires direct support to the foot that may be approached in two ways. You may try over-the-counter type orthotics (foot inserts) that you can move from shoe to shoe. In reality, most pairs of feet are asymmetric and over-the-counter products do not address individual feet, but custom orthotics do.

They're a very comfortable, affordable solution that I use myself, for my family and my patients. Orthotics not only support your feet but ultimately your back since your feet form the foundation of your body. If that's not addressed, many of your other physical complaints will not resolve but persist.

One noted treatment that treats muscle pain, which has proven very exciting and beneficial for my patients, is called dry-needling technique. This treatment has been adopted by many professional athletes and sports teams. I developed a particular method of this and teach it to healthcare professionals around the nation and the world. If you're suffering with ongoing pain, this is a good treatment option to consider.

While your job may be physically demanding, that doesn't mean you're off the hook from exercising. Specifically, aerobic physical activity is a great defender against stress. As little as 10-15 minutes a day of aerobic exercise is beneficial for reducing stress. But if physical pain is limiting your ability to exercise, then it's important to address that first.



David B. Fishkin of **The Fishkin Center** offers physical therapy, exercise therapy and other types of non-narcotic manual therapies, with offices in Rockville and Calverton, Maryland. Insurance and affordable payment plans available. For those who wish and need better foot support, reference this article to receive your complimentary foot screening. Please call (301) 444-4890 to make your appointment.