



Walmart
 We made it easier to find a better clean.
 Visit our new Swiffer aisle. [Learn more](#)

©2010 PMS

- Home
- Weather
- Local News
- u local
- National News
- Politics
- Entertainment
- Sports
- Traffic
- Pets
- Weddings
- Health**
- Caregiving Advice
- Breast Cancer
- Project Economy
- Food
- Irresistible

Get Headlines Sent To Your Email Or Phone

Enter E-mail

GO

- MARKETPLACE**
- Advertise With Us
 - Austin Outdoors
 - Triad Experts
 - Green Pages
 - Automotive
 - Family
 - Dating
 - Jobs
 - Real Estate
 - House & Home
 - Education
 - Travel
 - Grow Your Business
 - Get Coupons

SEARCH

Site Web Yellow Pages **GO**

Hot Topics: [Who Got Arrested?](#) | [Flight Of Honor](#) | [Lottery](#)

[As Seen On 12](#)

Homepage > HEALTH

Recession Can Actually Improve Your Health

Job Reductions Allow More Time For Leisure

Shiloh Woolman, Staff writer

UPDATED: 4:10 pm EDT April 28, 2009

- Email Print
- Comments (0)
- [Recommend](#)
- SHARE

A recession can wreak havoc on everything from your stocks to your job security, but one thing that seems to improve in a downturn is people's health.

What? Don't layoffs create stress and loss of health insurance and higher rates of smoking and drinking to deal with it all? Not according to research. In fact, sleep length and quality improve in a downturn. Leisure time -- including vacations -- rises. People spend more time chatting on the phone.

That's all according to research by Ryan Edwards, an assistant professor of economics at Queens College in New York.

Out Of Work? Work On Yourself

Recessions can affect consumers in three ways: people lose their jobs, their work may be cut back and given a smaller paycheck and their assets may lose value. Since even a major spike in unemployment rates might drive only a mild percentage of people out of jobs, many others just find themselves with more time outside of work. Edwards said they use that time to de-stress and take care of themselves.

"In this slowdown now, there's a huge reduction in consumption spending, so maybe you eat out less to save money, and it's also probably much healthier (to eat at home). I think one of the main things is having the time," Edwards said.

People working 40-hours weeks who had been at their desks 50, 60 or even 70 hours a week now have time to cook with the family, hit the gym and take a vacation.

That's been the case for Juli Logemann, 26, who lost her job in the video game industry. Logemann was laid off Oct. 30, and has been [blogging about the experience](#). She said she's taking the opportunity to get to know her relatively new home of Los Angeles, exploring the city like a tourist. And she's spending at least an hour a day rowing as she prepares for her first 10K race.

Health Statistics Improve During Downturns



Related

RECESSION HEALTH

Feature: [Keep Job In Hard Times](#)

Slideshow: [Stress-Relieving Tips](#)

FROM OUR PARTNERS

Tips: [Manage Your Job Stress](#)

Health: [Eat Better At Office](#)

Advice: [Stay Positive In Negativity](#)

Fitness: [Find Time In Your Workday](#)

Most Read Most Watched Most Commented

[Husband, Wife Sought In Fatal Moped Crash](#)

[Woman Found Dead; Man Charged With Murder](#)

[Post Office Closing, Residents Upset](#)

[Cable Facing Competition As AT&T Unveils U-verse](#)

[» More Most Popular](#)

Christopher Ruhm of the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, said his research shows the positive effects from that behavior.

"Heart attacks and deaths from cardiac disease decline ... by a lot," Ruhm said.

Specifically, he found that when unemployment rises 1 percent, total mortality falls as much as a half percent, which includes a 3 percent reduction in traffic deaths.

Ruhm's work also finds that severe obesity, smoking and physical inactivity fall, and binge drinking doesn't rise.

In addition to eating better and exercising more, Ruhm found that mortality rates fall during recessions partly because there's less pollution in the air. Factories are shuttered or working less, and fewer jobs means less driving. Less driving also means fewer traffic accidents and that helps lower the overall mortality and injury rate.

Not Everyone Is Healthier

Despite all of this good news, some people suffer. Mental health deteriorates with the economy, Edwards, Ruhm and studies from Europe have all found.

"We're healthier, but we're not necessarily happier when times are bad," Ruhm said. "The measures of mental health seem to go the opposite way."

Logemann, for example, defined her stress level as medium and said she's spending up to four hours a day looking for jobs to try to replace her income and benefits.

Preventive or elective care also gets put off as people lose discretionary money and health insurance. Ruhm said schedules for cataract surgery, joint replacement and dentist appointments almost certainly fall with the economy.

Edwards found that while middle- and high-income workers can relax and live off savings for several months, low-income workers who are often the least educated suffer almost immediately.

"People with a high school degree or less especially face this possibility of losing health. People with high education who have saved some money, it's those folks who -- even if they lose their jobs -- they benefit to get rid of job stress. Folks with a very low education might legitimately be hurt," Edwards said.

And there are no studies to show that long-term unemployment improves health.

Work Is Hazardous

Still, the research shows that on some level, work is bad for you.

"(There are) occupational stress and health hazards -- work is hazardous," said Ruhm. "(But) compared to not eating, work is pretty good, right?"

While Edwards said he believes the past trends will hold up in the current economic times, Ruhm isn't so sure. He said 2008 and 2009 may be different than what he studied about the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

"What's going on now may well be something we haven't seen for quite a while, so how well the past predicts the present may not be clear," Ruhm said.



WXII NEWS WXII 12 News Mornings on Facebook

Like

11,469 people like WXII 12 News Mornings

Eileen	Kim	David	Sylvia	Chris
Tracy	Debra	Justin	Jerry	Skip