

## Steps to a Healthy Lifestyle

The majority of the leading causes of disease are actually preventable by making healthier lifestyle choices. Living healthy is not only about preventing disease, but also about creating balance in your physical, spiritual and emotional health. Remember the following tips to prevent disease as well as promote balance in your life.

### Balanced Diet

A balanced diet contains lean proteins, healthy fats, 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, whole grains, and plenty of water. You will be healthier if you limit your intake of saturated and trans fats, sodium, refined sugars and processed foods. For the highly needed variety of nutrients and antioxidants, add lots of color to your plate. Pleasure in your eating can be found in being more mindful of tastes and textures and slowing down to enjoy the meal. Remember to watch your portion sizes.

### Exercise & Activity

Exercise can help lower cholesterol, improve blood sugars and reduce stress levels. As a general goal, aim for at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity for overall good health. More may be needed for weight loss. But remember, breaking it up is an option as well. As lives become more sedentary due to desk jobs and long commutes, be sure to incorporate some extra steps in your day such as parking farther away and taking the stairs when possible. Wearing a pedometer is a great way to assess how much activity you are really getting on a daily basis. The recommended amount of steps is 10,000 steps a day.

### Rest & Sleep

Being rested allows you to have better control over your diet resulting in better choices along with less cravings for sugar and caffeine. In addition, while you sleep the immune system strengthens and your body fights infections and disease. For health benefits, it is recommended for an individual to get between 7 and 8 hours of sleep per night. With the on-the-go culture and the demands of today, the average American does not get the recommended amount of sleep. Better sleep can be accomplished by creating an area that is ideal for sleeping, including cool temperatures, darkness and quiet; turning off the television and computer an hour before you go to bed; avoiding caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the evening; and avoiding exercise 2 to 3 hours before bed.

### Stress Management

Stress management can help improve sleep, blood pressure and overall quality of life. A positive attitude alone has shown to improve stress levels. Yoga, prayer, meditation, journaling, reading, exercising, deep breathing and bubble baths are healthy ways to manage your stress. Stress can also be managed by

finding the joy in life through spending time with friends and loved ones; working on hobbies; reading comics or watching funny movies.

## Eliminate Addictions

Quitting smoking has one of the biggest impacts on health. Other addictions such as alcohol, drugs, caffeine, and sugar also pose threats to your health. Reducing these substances can significantly help improve health and reduce stress and anxiety levels. Keeping a journal can help to identify certain habits and triggers which is a great first step toward quitting. Next you could start cutting down, gradually reducing the amount you use each day. For further assistance, seek out professional help or support groups.

## Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- American Lung Association: [www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org)
- American College of Sports Medicine: [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)
- American Dietetic Association: [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

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