



How Do You Stay Healthy?

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Your health is critical especially as you move to the Next Stage – the Reinventing Adulthood, or a time when you move from your focus on work to your focus on your self and life. For many health will become an increasingly important and determinative factor to their happiness and ability to do what they you want. Much has been written about health, and what it takes to remain healthy. This blog is going to summarize the latest research, and offer a way for you to develop your own Health Management Plan.

There are three elements that need your attention in order to remain healthy:

1. Exercise
2. Diet
3. Taking care of yourself

Let's examine what we know about each:

EXERCISE – DON'T JUST SIT THERE, DO SOMETHING

Much research has found a direct correlation between one's health and the strength of the immune system, processing abilities of the brain, and endurance of the heart. We are creatures that need continuous exercise in order to sustain the body's strength. Unfortunately, most modern lives do not have exercise naturally part of one's daily living, so therefore we need to purposefully structure the time into everyday living. A good rule of thumb is to have a complete exercise program planned for at least 1 hour every day. Given life's normal activities, if you make it to 5 days per week, you are ahead of the game. The exercise routine should include these 3 categories of activities:

1. **Aerobic or cardiovascular** – these are activities that increase your heart rate and expand your lung capacity. These include running, bicycling, swimming, etc. Your activity should increase your heart rate to between 120 and 140 beats per minute and do this for 20 to 30 minutes. Using interval training, where you move from moderate activity to significant activity for short bursts of time (15 to 60 seconds) often provide the greatest value in these activities.
2. **Strengthen building** – these are activities that increase your muscle mass. This means working with weights or doing exercises that use your body as the weight (e.g., push-ups, plank, etc.). As we age, muscle mass naturally declines as do the structure of the bones. Strength building activities for 20 to 30 minutes as part of your daily exercise routine can reverse these trends.
3. **Stretching** – these activities put pressure to stretch and lengthen your muscles, tendons and ligaments. This is important to create greater flexibility in your muscle structure and improve your balance. Both of these deteriorate with age unless you do something to counteract them.

Simply stated – make sure your daily exercise routine has elements of these three activities and you will make a significant difference in increasing your ability to DO the things you want for a long time.

DIET – YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Your weight is the simple product of what you eat (input) and what you do (output – aka exercise or life style activity). Research has shown that most men over 60 should consume between 2,000 and 2,400 calories, and women the range is 1,600 to 2,000. But calories are not created equal – what you eat and when you eat it matter. Protein is the building block of most elements of your body; while there is some controversy over how much, the Centers for Disease Control suggest that only 10% - 30% of calories should be protein rich foods. The other 70% to 90% should be in fruits and vegetables. Grains and carbohydrates should be limited within the overall diet. For recommendations on what you should eat and how much, based on your age, gender, etc., visit this website:

www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/interactiveDRI.

Water is the most important liquid you should drink. Not only is it simple and prevalent for most people, water carries the nutrients you need throughout your body and enables much of your organs, muscle and skin to be enriched and flexible. Normally, men should consume approximately 12 – 15 cups of water per day, and women should consume between 8 – 12 cups per day. Drinks like coffee, flavors or colas do not add the kind of nutrition that normal water provides, and should not be counted in your consumption plan for water.

There are many diets out there that say they promote health. But, there are two plans that show the most reliable research that link certain diets to longevity and the quality of life:

- The Mediterranean Diet – a good source is: <http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20793870,00.html>
- The Blue Zone Diet – a good source is: <https://bluezones.com/recipes/food-guidelines/>

Finally, when you eat matters. Most of your calories should be consumed before 2:00PM (14:00). This gives your body time to process and utilize the food you take. Food that is eaten later in the day tends to be stored in fat cells within the body for use at later times – which adds weight and bulk to the average body. So there is an old saying that gives guidance here:

“Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper.”

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

This third element of staying healthy builds on the first two elements and can be more personalized. You should examine what is important to you, and what you can do that provides a special form of attention to your health that is encouraging, fun, effective and meaningful. What you do will likely be different from others, but doing something is very important. Here are some ideas for you to consider.

1. **Go see your doctor** – get a regular physical and when there is some issue or problem, work quickly with your physician to address this. As we age, we are likely to have health issues, avoiding them will most likely only make it worse. You have but one life, so don't be stupid and waste it by avoiding doing something that you know in your heart you should do. Just do it.
2. **Mindfulness and Meditation** – much research has shown the value of mindfulness exercises and meditation. It has significant impact on reducing stress and strengthening your body's manage to address stress. The reason that excessive stress is not good is because it creates inflammation throughout your body, and this weakens your body and your immune system. If you're doing a lot to strengthen your body and eat what is most valuable to you, consider also integrating various mindfulness and meditation into your daily living. You will be surprised at the value you receive from these simple things.
3. **Take your vitamins** – there is much hype on vitamins and conflicting research on their impact and value. Does Vitamin C increase your immune system? Does an aspirin help reduce the risks of heart attacks and prevent cancer? Does Vitamin D help promote your cancer fighting abilities? Does Omega 3 help your digestion? Do probiotics strengthen the good bacteria and increase your body's ability to process the foods you eat? Does Vitamin B-12 also help with your digestive system? Do daily portions of flaxseeds increase your immune system, heart muscle and capabilities to prevent cancer? You should do your research, and determine which vitamins and other supplements will provide you with the greatest value. Be cautious of scams, but take the best vitamins for you.
4. **Strengthen your immune system** – medical science is beginning to fully understand the power and abilities of your own body's immune system, and are identifying ways to strengthen and utilize it to address many of life's health issues. A simple goal for you is to research and determine what is necessary to strengthen your own immune system and your ability to prevent diseases as well as increase your capabilities to fight them when necessary.

5. **Get a good night's sleep** – sleep is the next major area for increasing health benefits. Much research is being done to understand the power of sleep on the health and mental abilities of each individual. While for many people, getting a full night's sleep is a challenge, there are new and creative techniques that promote them. Do your research. There are also a lot of fraud in products that say that help you sleep, but don't. And, drugs that help you sleep are not the answer. Find ways to naturally enhance your ability to go to sleep at a reasonable time and make it through the night. You will wake up and be thankful for this for the rest of your life.

Staying healthy is one of the most important things you can do as you age and enter the new frontier of the Reinventing Stage of life – age 55 to 85+. Consider these simple routines, habits, and strategies to enhance your ability to enjoy the life you have for as long as you can. One does not know when the call will come or how it will come, but it is always important to use the time we have to the best of our abilities. This is a good time to consider a quote from Henry David Thoreau:

“When it comes time to die, let us not discover that we have never lived.”