

# healthy habits



Empowering Consumers with Better Health Care

Issue 8

## Pursuing a Healthy Lifestyle

By choosing to live a healthy lifestyle, you may improve the quality of your physical well-being and reduce the chances you will suffer from preventable conditions, such as some forms of heart conditions, cancer, and obesity, which is connected to many health problems.

Some medical experts worry that young people focus on career and financial goals at the expense of their health — only to find themselves physically unable to enjoy all they've worked for in their older years. <sup>(1)</sup> Making your health a priority doesn't necessarily mean giving up your favorite foods and activities. Making health a priority means that you will learn to create balance in your life.



**Create balance in your life by making health a priority.**

This newsletter will help you learn how to keep balance in your activities and diet in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

### How to live healthy

There are many benefits of living a healthy lifestyle. Many of today and tomorrow's leading causes of death, disease, and disability can be significantly reduced by avoiding six

interrelated categories of behavior that are initiated during youth and fostered by social and economic conditions: <sup>(2)</sup>

### Tobacco use

The use of tobacco products has been proven to lead to poor health, disease, cancer, and death. Even second-hand exposure to the smoke from cigarettes can cause the same negative side effects. The risks are especially high for children. These products must be avoided to promote a healthy lifestyle.

### Tips

- Avoid indoor areas where smoking is allowed.
- Do not start using tobacco products.
- If you do use tobacco products, discuss methods of quitting with your physician.
- Never use tobacco products around children.

### Behavior that results in injury or violence

It may seem obvious, but avoiding dangerous, violent, or hazardous situations is good for your health. Take precautions whenever you are performing risky or potentially dangerous activities. These types of precautions can include something as simple as keeping a first-aid kit in your car and bringing plenty of water on a hiking trip.

### Tips

- Be prepared for the unexpected.
- When traveling, research your destination thoroughly.
- Do not attempt to perform a risky stunt or activity (such as rock climbing or sky diving) without the help of an expert.

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- Always bring a friend or companion when you are participating in an activity that may be potentially dangerous.
- Always let someone know where you are going and how long you expect to be gone.
- Use seat belts. Be sure children are properly restrained.
- Wear protective gear when the activity warrants (helmets, knee pads, etc.).

## Alcohol or substance abuse

The abuse of alcohol or any other addictive substance can adversely affect your mental and physical well being. It is important to use alcohol in moderation, if at all. Use prescription drugs only as prescribed by a licensed physician, and never take illegal substances.

### Tips

- Never drink and drive. Even one drink can impair your abilities.
- Take only the recommended dosage of both prescription and over-the-counter drugs.
- Be aware of drug side effects, such as drowsiness or impaired coordination.
- Contact a physician or a specialist if you feel you have a problem.

## Unhealthy eating habits and poor hygiene

Unhealthy eating and poor hygiene are two habits that can have a very negative effect on your health. Unhealthy eating prevents your body from receiving all the vitamins, nutrients, and proteins it needs to function at a high performance level. Poor hygiene increases your exposure to harmful viruses and bacteria that cause illness and disease. For healthy living, eat a balanced diet and maintain clean habits.

### Tips

- Avoid fad diets that eliminate carbohydrates or fats from your daily nutritional intake.
- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables. Include moderate amounts of meats and carbohydrates.
- Limit saturated fats, trans fats (also called hydrogenated fats), cholesterol, and salt. Choose a side salad, fruit cup, or yogurt instead of a side of fries.
- Eat regularly (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). Avoid excessive snacking in between meals.
- Pay attention to your own personal hygiene as well as the cleanliness of your surroundings.

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day, and preferably after each meal and snack. Drink water throughout the day to help rinse food particles trapped in your mouth.
- Wash hands regularly with soap and warm water.
- Maintain clean living and working environments.

## Sedentary lifestyle

Sometimes it is nice to kick back and relax, but relaxation must be balanced with activity as well. It is important for the well being of your body that you remain physically active to keep your body strong.

### Tips

- Avoid sitting for long periods of time. If you are working or taking a long car trip, take breaks to stand up, stretch, and walk around.
- Become involved in community sports or sign up to be a member of your local gym.
- Instead of using the elevator, walk up the stairs.
- Foster a love of activity in your children. Do not let them play video games all day. Send them outside.

## Sexual behavior that causes unintended pregnancy and disease

Sexually transmitted diseases are some of the most potent killers and disablers in the country today. If you choose to engage in risky sexual behaviors, always use some form of protection.

### Tips

- Abstinence is the only sure way to avoid these diseases.
- Know the sexual and medical history of your partner.
- If you want to avoid pregnancy, always use birth control.
- Use protection that will prevent the transmission of disease, such as condoms. Birth control pills will usually prevent pregnancy, but have no effect on sexually transmitted diseases.
- Maintain a long-term, single-partner relationship.

## References

- (1) WebMD Inc., May 16, 2005. Retrieved December 2005 at <http://www.webmd.com/content/Article/106/108051.htm>.
- (2) World Health Organization. 2006. Retrieved January 2006 at [http://www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/en/](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/en/).

