

# BE HEALTHY AND LIVE LONG

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An ancient saying shows us the importance of 'health' by stating that "A man may have wealth, a beautiful home, intelligence, social status and all the material comforts that life can offer but if he does not have 'health' then he does not have anything". It is so true, because all these blessings cannot be enjoyed unless a person is healthy enough to enjoy the comforts of a good life.

The one single thing you can do to stay healthy is to eat 'right', eat 'well' but eat 'right'. If you want to further improve your health and prevent many kinds of diseases then you will add regular exercise or physical activity to your healthy diet habits. Consistently eating right and doing regular moderate physical activity will prevent or control many diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, high blood pressure and bowel problems such as chronic constipation and many other 'nuisance' problems such as osteoarthritis. When you combine healthy food choices and eating habits with regular physical exercise, many of these conditions can be prevented or controlled.

One of the most important causes of many of these chronic problems such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, osteoarthritis is being overweight. Being overweight often starts in childhood and adolescence, by wrong eating such as eating 'junk' food and not being active e.g. sitting in front of the television and eating Doritos or potato chips in front of the television. This continues through to adulthood because habits once formed are difficult to break.

The brain and the tissues of the body need nutrients to function; therefore it is important not to 'starve' the body of nutrient materials. However, it is important to give the body the 'right' nutrients in the right amount not too much and not too little. The 'right' nutrients constitute 'a balanced' diet.

There are six types of food groups that constitute the essential nutrients groups. Each individual must strive to eat meals that include as many of the food groups as possible. The food groups are

- **grains** - e.g. whole grain bread, cereal, crackers, rice, or pasta (recommended 3 ounces everyday)
- **vegetables** - e.g. dark green vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, dry beans and peas
- **fruits** - e.g. eat different kinds of fruits preferably fresh, but canned or frozen fruits are good too. Avoid fruit juices because they often contain a lot of added sugar and do not contain any fiber
- **milk** - e.g. skim or low fat (1% or 2%) milk or fat free yogurt
- **meat and beans** - e.g. low fat or lean meats and poultry. Eat more fish and beans, peas, nuts and seeds. When you eat meat, try not to fry it but do grill or broil or bake it and remove the skin

When you go food shopping, make sure that you read the labels on the foods carefully. Consider the following

- serving size - for example if you buy a packet of dried apricots it may say on the label serving size = 5 pieces

calories - this is the number of calories in each serving

total fat - the total amount of fat in each serving

saturated fat - is the 'bad' fat in each serving

trans fat - is the bad type of fat that is associated with heart disease and cardiovascular disease

Try to buy foods that do not contain trans fat and are low in saturated fat. Also if any of the foods that you need to buy have a low fat or 'fat free' option e.g. 2% milk as compared to skim milk, then buy the 'fat free' type.

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Now that you know the 'contents' of the food that are good for you, you are ready for the next step

### **'The golden rules' of eating**

- eat breakfast every day
- eat more whole grains and less fine processed flour breads
- eat as many different types of vegetables as you can each day
- eat fruit and avoid store bought fruit juice
- eat less fat especially 'solid' fats such as butter and shortenings; prefer oils such as olive and canola
- avoid added sugars, these give you only 'empty calories' and nothing else e.g. those in colas, fruit juices
- do not skip meals
- do not replace a meal by a snack
- if you need to lose weight, decrease the size of your portions rather than skipping meals
- eat your food slowly, do not 'gulp' it down fast, and chew each morsel at least 10 to 20 times
- keep low sugar low fat snacks in the house and office so you can eat those safely if you are hungry e.g. carrots, celery, cucumber, apple, banana or other fruit

Now that you know how to eat and what to eat, to further improve your health you must add the final ingredient to the 'health soup' which is exercise or physical activity. Exercise or physical activity can be fun and need not be something that is burdensome. You can include moderate physical activity in your daily routine easily by making just a few changes to your daily routine.

- take the stairs instead of the elevator
- park your car at the far end of the lot
- get off the bus one stop before your regular destination and walk
- take a walk after dinner instead of watching television
- wash the car or clean the yard
- go regularly to the park with your family or friends
- if the weather is bad, walk inside the mall
- get up and stretch and take short walks away from the computer if you have a 'desk job'
- when you are talking on the phone, stand up and move around rather than sitting

If you have a pattern of eating when you are happy or sad or stressed out or use food as 'comfort', try to do your best to find the cause of your stressors and eliminate the root cause that makes you eat. You may seek the help of friends, relatives or your physician who will advise you on how to cope with stress. It has been shown by many different research studies that exercise and physical activity will help to relieve stress and help to elevate your mood. So if you feel 'down' sometimes, a good brisk long walk will probably work better than taking a pill or drinking alcohol.

Regular exercise and a sensible healthy balanced diet will help to avoid or control many of the dangerous diseases which cause a high number of deaths and cause much morbidity at the present time, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, heart attack, osteoarthritis, for women irregular menstruation or lack of menses completely, it may even cause infertility by causing you not to ovulate each month.

You are the master of your health, take control of it and you will see the benefits of a healthy and long life. Make your physician your friend and supporter and seek help from your physician. Do not hesitate to ask your physician to advise you and provide you with answers to any questions that you may have.