REACHING FULL HEALTH POTENTIAL

It's up to you to reach your full health potential. Your habits – how often you exercise, what you eat, how much you sleep and whether you smoke – can greatly affect your health. So can your attitude towards safety and accident prevention. Whether you take advantage of health screening tests can also influence your health.

Exercise

Regular, moderate exercise can help reduce your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, non-insulin dependent diabetes, and colon and breast cancer. It can also help you lose eight or maintain a healthy weight.

Exercise can make you feel more energetic, help you sleep better, reduce stress or anxiety and suppress your appetite. It can help relieve depression and in women, reduce the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. When you exercise regularly, you improve your muscle tone and bone strength. Good muscle tone and strong bones protect your tendons and ligaments from damage. Through regular exercise your muscle become better able to use oxygen delivered through the bloodstream. Your heart and lungs become more efficient at taking in oxygen and getting rid of carbon dioxide.

Types of Exercise

The most important type of exercise is aerobic or endurance training, which builds cardiovascular fitness. Aerobic exercise moves large muscle groups in a rhythmic, continuous fashion over a period of time.

Weight training or strength training, builds strength and makes muscles larger. It may also increase flexibility because it involves motion. With this type of exercise, the muscle is developed as it tenses and relaxes, tenses and relaxes. Weight training activities include exercise with free weights, some calisthenics such as push ups and working out with weight machines.

Health Exams

The annual physical is no longer advocated. Instead of an annual physical, periodic health exams are recommended. These medical check-ups can help in the prevention, detection or treatment of conditions, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol, and other treatable problems before they lead to more serious health problems.

When you should have these exams, — and exactly what will be included in the exam — depends on the state of your health, your family history of disease and other risk factors for disease you may have. Be sure to let your doctor know about any unusual symptoms you have or any concerns you have about your health. Follow your doctor's recommendation about how often to plan a visit.

Immunizations

Immunizations or vaccines can help prevent many diseases in both children and adults. Immunizations work by helping the body produce antibodies against the disease. These antibodies work to fight infections.

Nutrition

Bad eating habits can increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, obesity, and many types of cancer. Eating right can help lower your chances of developing certain health problems.

Nutrition is complex. Nutrients depends on each other. For example, vitamin C makes it easier to absorb the ion in foods. Long-term use of large amounts of the mineral zinc can cause a deficiency in copper and iron because zinc interferes with absorption of copper and iron. Large doses of vitamin A and iron can be toxic. That's why self-diagnosis and mega-dosing with specific vitamins or minerals can end up doing harm instead of good.

So what can you do when it comes to good nutrition? In a nutshell, eat well balanced diet, with moderate amounts of a variety of foods. Get plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, and avoid fat and sugary sweets.

Nutrition Basics

Caffeine. Caffeine is a mild stimulant used by more than 80% of American adults who begin their day with a cola or a cup of coffee or tea.

Calories. This is a unit of measurement. It is used to describe the amount of energy provided by food. How many calories you need to maintain your weight depends on your size, your metabolism (how fast your body burns calories), your age and your level of physical activity. The average inactive person's daily caloric need is about 16 calories per pound of body weight. An active person needs about 20 calories per pound of body weight. And there are 3,500 calories in one pound of fat.

Carbohydrates. Carbohydrates sometimes called starches—are easily converted into energy. Complex carbohydrates are found in breads, pastas, cereals, potatoes, and other vegetables and fruits. Complex carbohydrates take longer for the digestive system to breakdown. Simple carbohydrates are sugars. Cookies and candy, for example, contain simple carbohydrate. Simple carbohydrates are digested very quickly. Unfortunately, foods such as cookies and candy don't contain a lot of nutrients besides sugar, so they're often referred to as "empty calories" or "junk food."

Cholesterol. Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in the cells of the body. Some cholesterol is in foods such as meat, milk and egg. The liver also makes cholesterol. Saturated fats from food increase the liver production of cholesterol. The body needs some cholesterol to function. But high levels of cholesterol in the blood can damage the arteries, such as damage from atherosclerosis, and put you at risk for heart disease and stroke. You can do many things to reduce the level of cholesterol in your blood. If your cholesterol level is high, try a one-to-six month trial of diet

and lifestyle changes. Lifestyle changes include exercising regularly, losing weight if you are over-weight and stopping smoking if you smoke.

Fats. Fats in food provide energy. But they can also be stored by the body as fat. Some fat is needed for the growth and repair of various tissues, including the nervous system. They also help in the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

Fat contain saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids. You can tell whether a fat is mostly saturated or unsaturated or unsaturated by whether it's hard (saturated) or soft (unsaturated) at room temperature. Palm and coconut oils, which are saturated fats, are exceptions to this rule.

Saturated fats may increase the body's production of cholesterol, which can lead to atherosclerosis and heart disease.

Monounsaturated fats don't increase cholesterol. They're liquid at room temperature and either semi-solid or solid when they're cold. Monounsaturated fats are olive and peanut oils.

Polyunsaturated fats also don't increase cholesterol. In fact, they lower it slightly. They're liquid at both room temperature and when cold. Fish, corn, and soybean oils are polyunsaturated fats.

Hydrogenated fats, which are chemically modified to last longer, may be as unhealthy as saturated fats. They're in most margarines and are most often referred to as partially hydrogenated oil.

Fibre. Also called roughage, fibre is the indigestible element in your diet. Dietary fibre is the part of food that can't be digested and converted into energy.

Fibre adds bulk to the bowel movement and draws water into the large intestine, helping to move waste products through your intestine more quickly. Fibre relieves constipation and thus reduces the strain on haemorrhoids. There are two main types of fibre: soluble and insoluble fibres.

Proteins. Proteins are needed for the body to grow to repair any damage. A diet low in protein can slow your growth and inhibit the working of your immune system. Proteins contain a combination of some or all of 20 different amino acids.

Meats like beef and pork, chicken, seafood and egg contain complete proteins that have all the essential amino-acids your body needs to make protein. Incomplete proteins don't have all of the essential amino acids. Incomplete proteins are found in beans, whole grains, rice, nuts and dairy products. You can combine foods that contain incomplete proteins so you get all the essential amino acids. Some possible combinations are beans and rice, baked beans and cornbread, and peanut butter and bread.

Salts. Salty snacks, animal products, canned soups and vegetables, processed meats and snacks food generally contain large amounts of sodium. Most people with high blood pressure can lower their blood pressure by lowering their sodium intake. The balance between sodium, calcium and potassium may be more important that how much sodium is eaten. It's best to keep your daily sodium intake under 2,400 milligrams.

Vitamins and Minerals. Vitamins and minerals are known as "micronutrients" because only tiny amounts are needed for good health. Vitamins come from plant or animal foods. Thirteen vitamins have been identified. The four fat-soluble vitamins are A, D, E and K. They need fat or bile to be absorbed by the body. Vitamin C and the eight B vitamins are water soluble vitamins because they don't need fat to be absorbed.

Minerals come from soil or water. They are absorbed by plants and animals. The major minerals are calcium, phosphorus and magnesium. They are called macro-minerals because you need larger amounts of them. The others are trace- or micro-mineral and include iron, copper, chromium, fluoride, zinc, iodine, manganese, selenium, and molybdenum.

Vitamins and minerals are used in molecular reactions in the body to breakdown fats, carbohydrates, and proteins into energy you can use.

The best way to protect against the lack of a certain vitamin or mineral is to eat a wide variety of foods, especially fresh fruit and vegetables.

Water. Water is needed for just about every process of the body. In addition, the body is made up of at least half water. The feeling of being thirsty help one to know when to drink more fluids. But it's not exact. That's why you should drink six to eight-ounce glasses of water or other liquid every day.

Eating Healthy

Once one understands the basics of what is in his/her diet, the next step is figuring out which foods make a healthy diet. There are several methods one can use: the component-percentage method of food selection, the eating right pyramid, and the four basic food groups.

Sleep

The exact reason we need sleep isn't known. But people can't get along without it. Not getting enough sleep can affect your mind, emotions and physical health.

You can help yourself get a good night's sleep. Discipline is sometimes needed to maintain a healthy sleep regimen.

- Don't drink extra coffee or soft drink with caffeine to keep awake if you're drowsy during the day.
- Finish exercising about one to two hours before going to bed. This gets your body slightly tired and helps you relax.
- Use your bedroom for sleeping and sexual activity only. Save stimulating activities like studying, watching TV and discussions for the other rooms.
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time very morning.
- Make sure the room is at comfortable temperature.

- Relax before bedtime. Short sexual intimacy before sleeping also has a relaxing effect.
- Don’t use sleep medicines or alcohols at night to help you become sleepy.

Safety at Home

Learn the rules of safety and practice them. For example, oil on the floor makes the floor sleepy and could cause a dangerous fall.

STD Prevention

The only way to absolutely prevent ever having a sexually transmitted disease (STD) is to not have sex or rather to only have sex with one partner who doesn’t already have an STD and who isn’t having sex with anyone else.

If you have more than one sexual partner or if you’re at all uncertain about whether your sex partner is having sex with anyone else, you may be at risk of catching an STD. It is very good to know your partner very well. Also look for signs of STD in your partner. Use a good condom.