

Healthy Living: What Are 10 Ways to Stay Healthy?

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Reviewed on 11/5/2021

1. Eat More Plants

One of the most important things you can do for your health is to eat a diet that primarily consists of high-quality plant foods. Eating more plants and less meat is associated with a decreased risk of many diseases, including:

- Obesity
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Many types of cancer
- High cholesterol

When eating plants, it's better to choose those that are as close to their natural state as possible. Pick the apple over the apple juice. Refined foods have often been stripped of their healthy fiber. Whole plant foods also have more protein. To make sure you're getting enough protein from plant sources include some of these foods in your diet:

- Tofu
- Quinoa
- Mushrooms
- Lentils
- Beans
- Turnip greens
- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Chickpeas
- Spinach



2. Eat Less Processed Food

Along with eating more whole plant foods, eating less processed food is associated with better health. Processed food is typically high in fat, sugar, and sodium and low in vitamins and fiber. Eating four or more servings of processed food daily is associated with a 62 percent increase in death from all causes. In contrast, diets that are lower in processed food are linked to lower risks of all reported diseases. Foods that are highly processed include:

- Packaged baked goods
- Packaged snacks
- Fizzy drinks
- Sugary cereals
- Ready-made meals



3. Move More

Many chronic diseases are associated with time spent in sedentary activity. But you don't have to run a marathon to get the benefits of moving more. These benefits go beyond maintaining or losing weight. Frequent, short bouts of physical activity that add up to 150 minutes per week can provide many benefits, such as:

- Improved memory and concentration
- Increased productivity and creativity
- Better mood and self-esteem
- Less stress, anxiety, and depression
- Better sleep
- Stronger immune system and fewer illnesses



4. Build Your Muscles

Strength training can help you maintain or build muscle mass, which naturally decreases as you age. Two or three 20- or 30-minute sessions of strength training will help you:

- Increase your muscle mass
- Build stronger bones
- Control your weight
- Develop better balance
- Increase your joint flexibility

You don't even need to go to the gym or invest in a lot of equipment to train your muscles. Some weight exercises that are good for strength training are:

- Abdominal crunches
- Step exercises
- Lunges
- Squats
- Pushups



5. Wash Your Hands Often

One of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick is to keep your hands free of germs. Germs from surfaces that people touch are transferred to unwashed hands. The germs are then passed along throughout the community. To properly wash your hands, follow these steps:

1. Wet your hands and apply soap
2. Scrub hands, including under nails, for at least 20 seconds
3. Rinse with running water
4. Dry

When people are educated about the proper method and benefits of handwashing, communities experience:

- A 23 to 40 percent decrease in the number of people who get sick with diarrheal illnesses
- A 16 to 21 percent decrease in the number of respiratory illnesses
- A 29 to 57 percent decrease in the number of days children miss school because of gastrointestinal illness
- A 58 percent decrease in the number of diarrheal illnesses in people with weak immune systems



6. Get Enough Sleep

With all of the demands on your time and the lure of always-on social media, it can be hard to get enough sleep. You may think you can function well on 5 or 6 hours of sleep, but adults need at least 7 hours of good-quality sleep each night. Children and teenagers need even more. The benefits of getting enough sleep go far beyond just feeling rested when you wake up. Better sleep habits are associated with:

- Reduced stress
- Improved mood
- Getting sick less often
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Reduced risks of diseases such as diabetes and heart disease
- Ability to think more clearly
- Fewer conflicts with other people
- Fewer injuries and accidents



7. Maintain Strong Relationships

Meeting a friend for lunch is more than just a nice diversion from a busy workday. Strong social connections are good for your health and wellbeing at all stages of life, but particularly as you age. Older people who have strong connections with family and friends are more likely to:

- Need less help at home
- Have a lower risk of dementia and decline in thinking
- Be more satisfied with their lives
- Have a better quality of life



8. Manage Your Mental Health

Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your physical health. The good news is that exercise and eating right will go a long way towards helping you maintain your mental health. Another big factor in managing your mental health is controlling your stress. Some ways to induce a relaxation response that helps you better cope with stress are:

- Say no to things that overwhelm you
- Do activities that you enjoy
- Visualize yourself succeeding at the challenges you face
- Learn relaxation techniques like breathing exercises and meditation
- Talk about things that are bothering you with someone you trust



9. Eliminate Bad Habits

Your bad habits can have a big impact on your health. Whether you're trying to quit smoking, drinking alcohol, or stress eating chips, understanding how habits form and how they can be changed is an important step in creating a healthy lifestyle. Enjoyable habits signal your brain to release dopamine, which is a chemical in your brain that creates cravings.

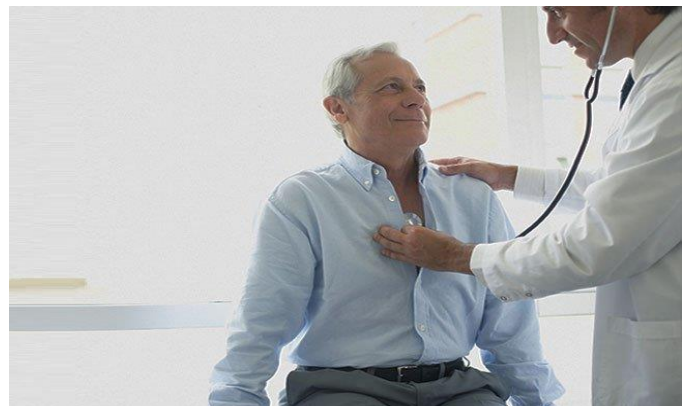
Bad habits can be difficult to overcome because of dopamine cravings. However, self-control is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. Try replacing your unhealthy habits with healthy ones and seek support from your friends and family.



10. Get Your Annual Checkup

Getting a yearly checkup with your health care provider is important even if you feel perfectly healthy. It gives you the opportunity to make sure you've received all of the vaccinations and preventative health tests you need. It also lets you discuss minor health issues before they become major.

Working with your health care provider to screen for illnesses increases the chances that you'll catch any serious problems early when they have a better chance of effective treatments or cures. An annual wellness visit can increase your lifespan and improve your health.



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