

COMMUNITY NUTRITION EDUCATION SERVICES, INC.

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HEALTHY AGING

The Importance of Healthy Eating and Physical Exercise

As we age, the importance of healthy eating and physical exercise should still rank highest among the ways that we take care of our health. Serious diseases that are linked to what we eat kill an estimated three out of four Americans each year. These diseases include heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some types of cancer, and diabetes.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Everyone has some degree of risk for developing diet-related chronic diseases, and this risk increases with age. Lifestyle factors that contribute to increased risk for these diseases include not eating enough fruits and vegetables, eating too many foods high in saturated fats (fried foods, full-fat dairy products, fatty cuts of meat), and not getting enough exercise.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Make smart choices from every food group. Mix up your choices within each food group (mypyramid.gov). Drink adequate water on a daily basis.

Get the most nutrition out of your calories. To know the facts use the label. Reminder skipping meals will decrease the amount of nutritious foods that you do need to eat every day.

Adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity 5 days a week. (Discuss this with your medical doctor before beginning the program).

Only you can protect your health through your healthy behaviors!!

We are a nation where the majority of us are overfed and undernourished

- Too much fat, sugar, and salt
- Fall below recommendation in the consumption of:
 - (1) fruits/vegetables
 - (2) whole grains
 - (3) dairy products low in fat

Simple lifestyle changes can save lives and improve your quality of life. A person does not have to drastically alter his or her diet to be healthier. Simply substituting an apple a day as a snack instead of a candy bar can make an important difference in lowering risk for disease and improving everyday performance. It is not necessary to make large changes in diet in order to improve health and avoid disease. Here are a few simple tips:

- Grab an apple, orange, banana, pear, or other piece of moderate-sized fruit to eat on-the-go.
- Snack on raw veggies like baby carrots, pepper strips, broccoli, and celery.
- Pick up ready-made salads from the produce shelf for a quick salad anytime.

Serious diseases that are linked to what we eat kill an estimated three out of four Americans each year. These diseases include heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some types of cancer, and diabetes. Eating a diet that contains 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day as part of a healthy, active lifestyle lowers the risk for all of these diseases.

Most Americans don't eat enough fruits and vegetables to keep them healthy. Despite the fact that they are important for maintaining overall good health and preventing diseases, eating fruits and vegetables is not even on many people's radar screens.

Taking multivitamins doesn't solve the problem—it is impossible to capture all of the vitamins, minerals, disease-fighting phytochemicals, and fiber found in fruits and vegetables, in a pill. Only fruits and vegetables, not vitamin pills, can provide all of these health-protecting nutrients together.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Everyone has some degree of risk for developing diet-related chronic diseases, and this risk increases with age. Lifestyle factors that contribute to increased risk for these diseases include not eating enough fruits and vegetables, eating too many foods high in saturated fats (fried foods, full-fat dairy products, fatty cuts of meat) and not getting enough exercise. These behaviors begin in childhood and become habits that can carry into adulthood.

Heart disease, which is largely influenced by what we eat, remains the number one killer of both American men and women. And, high blood pressure, which can be reduced within a month by changing eating habits, will affect 90 percent of American men and women at some point in their lifetime.

In general, men get chronic diseases more often than women and die from them at earlier ages. African American men have even higher rates of these diseases than white men, including heart disease, high blood pressure, many cancers, and diabetes, and get them even earlier in life.

The number of servings of fruits and vegetables that is recommended depends on a person's age and gender, ranging from five a day for children age 2 to 6 (as well as some women and some older adults) to nine a day for teenage boys and active men.

CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Leading causes of death, which include heart disease, high blood pressure, many cancers, diabetes and stroke, are largely preventable through lifestyle choices such as eating more fruits and vegetables. Eating 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day is one of the easiest things everyone can do to lower their chances for all of the diet-related diseases.

This may sound like a lot, but in fact one serving size is actually quite small (it fits in the palm of your hand), and it's easy to eat several servings during one meal in a vegetable or fruit salad, for instance. But remember, pills don't count.

BOTTOM LINE

Simple lifestyle changes can save lives and improve your quality of life. A person does not have to drastically alter his or her diet to be healthier. Simply substituting an apple a day as a snack instead of a candy bar can make an important difference in lowering risk for disease and improving everyday performance. It is not necessary to make large changes in diet in order to improve health and avoid disease. Here are a few simple tips repeated:

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