

HEALTHY LIVING

By

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A healthy lifestyle begins with the realization that each one of us has one and only one body to last an average of seventy years on this earth. If we take good care of our bodies and assuming no genetic imperfections, we can extend that lifespan by two or even four decades. Conversely, if we abuse or neglect our bodies, we can precipitate premature deaths and drastically reduce that lifespan.

Most, if not all, people wish for good health and longevity. The question then is what can we do to achieve and maintain the good health we seek. Being in good health is not simply the absence of disease, but rather a sense of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing.

The wisdom of the old Latin phrase “mens sana in corpore sano” meaning “a sound mind in a healthy body” remains true to this day. We must, therefore, focus on keeping our bodies healthy for the mind to be healthy, too. Fortunately, we have control over the major factors that have a significant impact on our health: what we introduce into our bodies, physical exercise and adequate rest/sleep. Since we live in a country with almost unlimited choices, it is our responsibility to carefully and consistently choose the right types of food to eat. The ubiquitous junk food, may taste great, but it is harmful to your health in the long run. We must also resist using substances such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana or illicit drugs. They spell misery, ruin and death.

Our bodies were created to move and, of course, work and rest. So whether you get involved in a professional exercise program or design one of your own, just get moving on a regular basis. After a long day of work and exercise, the body must rest and recharge itself for another day. So sleep or rather plenty of sleep serves a necessary physiological function. We can never go through life without it.

As noted previously, we need a healthy body to have a healthy mind. It is important that we learn to acquire useful knowledge, positive thoughts, emotional stability and positive social relationships. Our tradition has correctly identified positive social relationships as significant factors for our physical and emotional wellbeing. We can build on that tradition and strive to rid our minds of any negative thoughts and maintain positive social relationships at all times.

Despite the fact that Medicine can do wonders in this country, prevention is still better than cure. Therefore, it is important to visit your primary care doctor (sign up with one if you haven't done so already) once a year and more frequently if there is any concern. The reason for this is that certain medical conditions remain silent for many years unless detected early by a blood or other test. Immunization practices and screening tests such as Pap smears, mammograms, eye exams and some imaging studies must be taken seriously.

Finally, since we were never created to live forever, we eventually experience symptoms that warn us that something is wrong. Symptoms such as sudden onset of a severe headache, loss of vision, facial droop, arm or leg weakness, dizziness, chest pain, shortness of breath, abdominal pain, vomiting blood, severe bleeding and trauma including car accidents require an immediate visit to the nearest emergency department.

Rich or poor, we all have the power to make the right, basic choices in order to live long, healthy and happy lives.