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What is a Healthy Lifestyle?

by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

That is an interesting question, isn't it?

When asked, most of us think about our physical well-being. This can involve a variety of exercises or physical activities. Even walking is a good choice for many people. It is great for toning and strengthening our legs and hips, but it is good for other things too!

Brisk walking is a good 'cardio' exercise for our heart and lungs AND it is a weight bearing exercise. Which means what, you ask? Weight bearing exercises help to maintain and enhance our bone density. A loss in bone density leads to osteopenia and even osteoporosis. Osteoporosis can create other health problems too - check out the articles on the clinic website "Osteoporosis" and "Boning up on Osteoporosis" (www.halifaxchiropractic.ca).

Okay - so you have the physical well being with exercise, right? Wrong!

Physical well-being can also involve your diet. It is quite easy, really - you have to make sure that you have a balanced, healthy diet and not to take in (eat) more calories than what you 'burn off'. In other words if you eat too much then you will gain weight. This is not good at any age especially as we get older. As we get older our metabolism slows down - which means - those extra calories are harder to burn off. Overeating and snacks can cause those extra pounds to 'creep up' on us - especially around the belt-line.

The Importance of Water

In the December 2005 issue of Obesity Research (Volume 13; pages 2146-2152) it was reported that people who drank a lots of water:

- Consumed fewer calories (makes sense since water takes up space in your stomach).
- Drank less soft drinks and fruit drinks.
- Ate more fruits and vegetables.
- Ate low fat dairy products.

Conversely, if you tend not to drink much water the studies showed that you tended to eat more:

- Desserts.
- Salty snacks and candy.
- High fat meats.
- High fat dairy products.

So the overall message - which we have known for years - is that drinking water is good for you.

Hint

You should get yourself a refillable water bottle and set a goal of how much water you want to drink on a daily basis. If you get a bottle with the amounts listed along the side, you can even keep closer track of your consumption.

Remember 8 glasses of water a day! It's good for your digestion, your kidneys, your skin and your health.

What Else?

Most people automatically think of the physical aspects of a healthy lifestyle. But how does the emotional and spiritual well being contribute to our health?

Nowadays, high stress levels, especially in the workplace, are a common topic of discussion. Health care professionals see the adverse effects of this on the patient's health on a daily

basis. There is an increased frequency of people being put off work on "stress leave".

In many ways society and the workplace has created a situation that asks everybody to do more, in less time, and without the resources to accomplish this effectively and efficiently.

A recent study published in Behavioural Neuroscience (April 2006) suggests that stress, over an extended period of time, not only can increase anxiety, but they leave us less prepared to deal with stressful events.

Setting aside time for yourself, is always a good idea. People call it 'quiet time' but it can also be called 'me time'. Take time to read a book, go for a walk or spend some time with family or friends. Emotional well being can also be tied to spiritual well-being - this means different things to different people depending upon their beliefs. But it all has a bearing on our health and wellness.

So what should we do?

Set some goals. Decide on what will work for you and incorporate these things into your daily routine:

- Decide on a type of exercise. Decide how often, and how much.
- Start eating healthier.
- Drink more water.
- Get adequate amounts of sleep.
- Set time aside to re-energize yourself.

All of these things will help you to "live long and prosper" (for all you Star Trek fans).

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