

Celebrate Wellness!

You've heard it many times: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Many of the aches and pains of youth, the disabilities of old age, and disease complications that shorten our lives are related to our lifestyle choices. How can you stack the deck in your favor? Here are some tips, courtesy of the Virginia Chiropractic Association.

Official estimates put annual American smoking-related deaths at over 400,000.ⁱ High blood pressure, lung disease, and cancer do occur in non-smokers; but if you or someone you care about smokes, then quitting reduces the risk for these disorders while increasing the odds for better health and improved quality of life. The sooner someone quits, the better.

Diet also plays an important role in health. Obesity is an epidemic problem in America. Over 30% of Americans are obese.ⁱⁱ Attaining a healthy body weight and body composition can reduce your risk for diabetes, high blood pressure (hypertension), arthritis, and a variety of other diseases including certain cancers. A healthy, balanced diet includes proper hydration; fresh fruits and veggies; and a balance of macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates, and healthy fats).

Another way to combat obesity and other diseases is as simple as walking out your door. Though exercise brings risks, most people can benefit from an exercise program. Check with your doctor to determine what activities may be healthiest for you; and be sure that you choose activities you enjoy. A perfect blend of regular exercise will enhance your flexibility, your strength, your coordination, and your cardiovascular endurance. The "side effects" of a healthy exercise program will benefit almost every organ and system of your body, while benefiting mood, bone density, decreasing the risk of cancer, and even decreasing the risk of falls and fractures. Be sure to know your limits, and always begin with a proper warmup and conclude with a gentle cooldown -- including a sensible stretching routine.

You are what you eat; but you may also be what you think, and science has begun to link mental and physical health. Regular exercise may decrease your risk for dementia and Alzheimer's disease.ⁱⁱⁱ Another tip for living well: don't overlook the value of community. Whether it's church, or your dance club, social connections enhance and prolong the quality of life, and research suggests that social connections may actually help you live longer.^{iv}

Back pain and the common cold are the two leading reasons people miss work. Both employers and workers have a strong incentive to keep their employees healthy. Studies show a correlation between chiropractic care and accelerated return-to-work times.^v Evidence also supports a link between chiropractic care and less disability related to back pain.^{vi} Even for those with more serious diseases, chiropractic care can still be a part of living well. Some chiropractic doctors co-manage cancer patients with medical oncologists, and promising studies have shown improved quality of life for these patients.^{vii}

Doctors of chiropractic receive training in public health, nutrition, physiology, neurology, and caring for the human frame. In 2001, the chief medical officer of health insurer Blue Cross noted that the chiropractic holistic approach inspires patients "to change their behavior, to not smoke, to lose weight, to exercise, (and) to eat properly." Simply put, the chiropractic approach to health is safe, effective, and becoming ever more integrated into our lives.



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