

“Give thanks for good health and wellness”

We have often remarked that “health” is the absence or management of disease. But “wellness” is health plus more. To speak of someone as being “truly well” implies of a good balance of physical health, mental health, and spiritual health. The title above is appropriate for this week’s column. But, it has a two-fold meaning. Good health and wellness are certainly worthy of thanks, as they allow us quality as well as quantity of life. But, did you realize that being thankful and grateful can actually lead to or improve your degree of health and wellness? Quite a few well conducted medical studies have shown benefits to having a thankful heart and grateful attitude.

In 2003, a study called “Counting blessing versus burdens” found that keeping a gratitude journal resulted in participants reporting 16% less physical symptoms, 19% more time exercising, 10% less physical pain, and 8% more sleep. Also, 25% reported better sleep quality. Could you use some numbers like that?

Two other studies about that time demonstrated that feelings of thankfulness and gratitude were key factors in inducing the “relaxation response,” and that people like this had a reduction in depression symptoms for several weeks, and reported greater overall happiness scores. Quite a few studies have shown increases in vitality and energy in people who give thanks regularly and have a grateful attitude.

You may say that the above findings are all based on subjective reports of “feelings” that are hard to measure and define. Understand and agree. In 2007, a study titled “Gratitude: Effects on perspective and blood pressure” found that people instructed to count their blessings once a week experienced a significant decrease in systolic (top number) blood pressure. Two years later, a noted sleep study found that gratitude correlated directly with sleep quality. Grateful people were found to take less time to fall asleep, and thankful people slept longer on average. We could all use that – better sleep that happens quicker and lasts longer!

So, be thankful for good health, and have better health and wellness as a result. Be thankful to God from whom all blessings flow. Give thanks for living in the best County in the best State of the greatest Country in the world! Be thankful and have a grateful spirit towards others – people at work or school who help you, those that show you kindness, and even those who don’t. Be appreciative of things you have and are able to do. Appreciate your family and give thanks for all of them. If you feel tired from a busy day, give thanks for being able to walk and run around. Always remember on your worst day there are many who would gladly trade with you.

Not just on this one day, but if we make every day “Thanksgiving,” then we will all be more healthy, well, and better off. Give thanks – for good health!